



# Florida Communities Trust

March 26, 2007

Bobby Bonilla  
Parks & Recreation Department  
Lake County  
31150 Industry Drive  
Tavares, Florida 32778

Re: Annual Stewardship Report  
FCT #03-086-FF3  
PEAR Park Gateway

Dear Mr. Bonilla:

Thank you for providing the above-referenced Annual Stewardship Report to the Florida Communities Trust. We have reviewed the report and found that it adequately addresses the requirements of Rule 9K-7.013, Florida Administrative Code, and the Grant Award Agreement.

To further our understanding of the County's progress, please provide the information requested on the enclosed page by April 23, 2007.

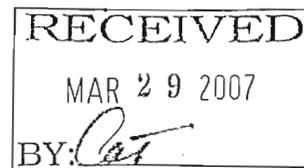
In your next Annual Stewardship Report, due January 30, 2008, please include photographs documenting the progress made in the development and maintenance of the project site.

If you have any questions, please contact Ed Eckstein at (850) 922-1705.

Sincerely,

Grant Gelhardt  
Environmental Administrator

GG/ee



## Requested Clarification Information

1. Please provide the status of amending the future land use map and the zoning designation for the project site to conservation, parks, or other similar category. If the designation has been amended, provide the dates the County adopted the new future land use and zoning designations. If the designation have not been amended, the amendment should be proposed at the next comprehensive plan cycle available to the County.
2. Please discuss when an archaeological survey will be conducted on the project site.
3. The site plan provided with the stewardship report shows two softball fields and a dog park on the FCT site. These improvements were not included in the approved management plan and will require an amendment to the approved management plan. Please submit the specific word changes (using underline for addition and ~~strike-out~~ for deletions) on the affected pages of the management plan. In addition, please provide a legible and appropriately-scaled site plan for the FCT project site that clearly identifies the project boundary, all proposed improvements and upland and wetland restore areas.

Lake County Parks & Recreation

PEAR PARK GATEWAY  
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Project # 03-086-FF3

April 2004

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This PEAR Park Gateway Management Plan is intended to describe the future use and management of the 50-acre addition to Lake County's Palatlahaha Environmental and Agricultural Reserve (PEAR) Park. PEAR Park's Gateway Project is located in the central western area of unincorporated Lake County south of the historic town of Okahumpka. The Gateway site is incorporated into the City of Leesburg. PEAR Park was leased by Lake County from the State of Florida for fifty (50 years). A lease (#4313) agreement and Site Management Plan was approved on May 29, 2001. Lake County will manage the site for conservation and protection of the natural and historic resources and for resource based outdoor recreation activities and education compatible with the conservation and protection of the public land. It is intended that the Management Plan for the Gateway site will be incorporated with the approved Site Management Plan for PEAR Park to best develop and manage the two sites as one public park. No development of the PEAR Park has occurred to date. A staff task team is working on a Site Development Plan for both sites that will allow for planned improvements and management of the entire park. Completion and approval of the Site Development Plan is expected during the summer of 2004. PEAR Park has been the site of a University of Florida Experimental Station for grapes and melons since the early 1930's. The entire site is barren except for the Palatlahaha Creek corridor, which remains natural and pristine. The Gateway site is a linear strip of property on the east boundary of the PEAR Park between the Park and US 27. This area of Lake County has rolling contours, which are indicative of the park terrain. There are three natural occurring wetland areas in the park. A rail bed and piling timbers remain on the Gateway site from an earlier railroad line which served the early settlers by providing commerce and transportation opportunity. The sites have a limited natural area history due to the operation of the Experimental station over the majority of the site. Migratory birds do make use of the wetlands area. Acquisition of the Gateway site was considered vital to put a greenprint between extensive residential development occurring in the area. This park site is surrounded on all sides by residential development thus there is no further opportunity for acquisition of property attached to or near the park.

The PEAR Park Gateway addition, for which funds were made available through the Florida Communities Trust (FCT), will provide a 50-acre addition on the east side of the existing PEAR Park and provide safe and convenient access to US 27, a main north south transportation artery in Lake County. This Management Plan will be developed in conjunction with the existing Site Management Plan for the PEAR Park in order to property develop and maintain the entire site in accordance with the Grant Award Agreement and in furtherance of the purpose of the grant application.

## II. PURPOSE

There are three major reasons for acquiring the PEAR Park Gateway site. Primary in that group is to preserve the natural environment of undisturbed upland and wetland marshes on the site. In close conjunction with that purpose is the ability to put down a greenprint that will provide a natural break in the spread of residential and commercial growth in the area. A final and very strong reason for the acquisition is to provide a connection to the main transportation artery and entry gateway into the main body of the entire 315-acre park. The current access to the park is poor in that it is on a substandard road that traverses a modular home residential site.

Lake County has committed that the project site, PEAR Park Gateway, will be managed only for the conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources, and for public recreation that is compatible with the conservation, protection and enhancement of the site.

The following is a prioritized list of management objectives for the site:

1. Protection of existing site resources.
2. Renovation of disturbed upland and wetland areas of the site.
3. Coordination of the Gateway site into the main PEAR Park site.
4. Development and operation of outdoor recreation opportunities.
5. Provision of environmental education programs.
6. Coordination of volunteer opportunities and programs specific to the park.
7. Recognition and education of historic, area agricultural practices of significance.

The following major comprehensive plan directives, that will be furthered by managing the site as proposed, are from the City of Leesburg Comprehensive Plan as the Gateway site was annexed into the City.

### Chapter Five Conservation Element

**Goal 1:** The goal of the Conservation Element is to conserve, protect, and appropriately manage the natural resources of Leesburg and the surrounding area to ensure a high environmental quality. Unless otherwise stated, all objectives in this element will be implemented within five years after the adoption of this plan.

**Objective A:** In conformance with time frames delineated by Section 163-3202, Florida Statutes, the City shall adopt and implement Land Development Regulations that protect and properly manage the quality and quantity of all surface waters.

**Policy 8:** The wetlands and shorelines within the City shall be conserved and protected through cooperation with FDER and FDNR who have jurisdictional authority for wetland, water quality, and submerged lands development and permitting, as well as through the adoption of local level of service criteria for stormwater management as specified in the Infrastructure, Future Land Use, and Capital Improvements Elements of this plan, through adoption of the Goals, Objectives, and Policies within the other elements of this plan that provide conservation and preservation mechanisms.

**Objective D:** In conformance with time frames delineated by Section 163.3202, Florida Statutes, the City shall adopt Land Development Regulations that shall conserve appropriately use, and protect fisheries, wildlife, minerals, vegetative communities, the habitat of endangered and threatened species, and provides protective measures for environmentally sensitive land (wetlands, 100-year flood plain), wildlife habitats, endangered species, Groundwater Aquifer, and unique vegetative communities.

**Policy 6:** The City shall maintain a comprehensive inventory of ecological communities and shall recommend such acquisition, through the Conservation and Recreation Land Program and the Save Our Rivers Program, of the most vulnerable communities as though necessary.

## Chapter Six

### Recreation and Open Space Element

**Goal 1:** Provide or assure provision of a full range of public and semi-public parks and open spaces which are well equipped, ensure public access to recreation sites, including freshwater beaches and shores, and are adequate in number for existing and future populations.

**Objective B:** Develop a system to access needs and propose capital improvements to provide adequate park and recreational facilities and land to meet the demands of future growth, based on established levels of service.

**Objective C:** The City shall coordinate with Lake County to expand the county's recreational functions.

**Policy 1.b.:** Further investigating opportunities for public access and enjoyment of the waterfront, improved bike, pedestrian, and equestrian trail systems, and open space opportunities.

**Objective D:** Public access to the recreation sites, including freshwater beaches and shorelines, shall be insured.

Communication between the City of Leesburg and Lake County has occurred and both parties are in agreement to proceed with amending the Future Land Use designation for the Gateway site to conservation, outdoor recreation, open space, or other appropriate similar category within one year of acquiring the site.

The two governmental agencies have agreed and the process has been started to change the zoning of the site from the residential and commercial designation to conservation, outdoor recreation, open space, or other similar category within one year of acquiring the site.

Lake County Government will ensure that the project site is identified in all literature and advertising as acquired with funds from the "Florida Communities Trust" and operated as a natural conservation area, outdoor recreation area or other appropriate descriptive language.

### III. SITE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

#### Existing Physical Improvements

The Gateway site contains a dirt road, a rail bed from the former T&G Railroad that traversed north and south through the site, power poles and lines on the east border of the US 27 road right-of-way, and sheds and a small porch pad from a former mobile home. There is perimeter fencing on the western and southern boundary but it was installed by the University and will be removed upon development of the two sites as one park.

## Proposed Physical Improvements

Refer to Master Site Plan, Exhibit A.1

1. **Multi-purpose paved trail.** Paved multi-purpose trail for biking, skating, jogging, exercise stations and walking will be developed on the site in conjunction with trail throughout the PEAR Park. This trail will be typical in design to other paved multi-purpose trails and will be approximately one mile long the Gateway site.

Trails will be located in a manner that will be buffered from adjacent existing and proposed residential development with a minimum of 100' vegetative buffer.

2. **Picnic Pavilion and Associated Elements.** Group picnic pavilions will be developed on the north and south areas of the park. Each pavilion area will include a playground; grills, trashcans, volleyball court, and open play area and will encompass approximately three to five acres in overall area. The North pavilion will be associated with the river trail and in close proximity to the multi-purpose trail. The South pavilion will be associated with the wetland marsh restoration area which will include a nature trail and this area will also be in proximity of the multi-purpose trail.
3. **River Trail and Boardwalk.** The existing Joe Stephany Memorial River Trail will be extended into the Gateway site and will include boardwalk over back flow ponds and shoreline areas as appropriate. The trail will be unpaved and will include educational signage designating native plants. Due to the limited amount of river access on the Gateway site the trail will be approximately one-quarter mile in length.
4. **Nature Trail with Bird Observation Deck.** A nature trail around the marsh restoration project on the south side of the site will provide educational signage, hiking opportunity, and an observation deck for educational programs and recreational programs. The trail will extend into the existing PEAR Park site and will be approximately one third of a mile in overall length.
5. **Special Event/Athletic Multi-purpose Field, Softball Fields and Dog Park.** ~~While~~ Primarily in the main PEAR Park site, there will be a multi-purpose field of approximately fifty acres ~~will extend into the Gateway site.~~ This field will be improved and maintained for a wide variety of cultural, educational, and recreational activities and programs. The Gateway site will include two softball fields and a dog park.

6. **PEAR Park Gateway Entry Road.** A paved road of approximately one quarter mile in length, providing access to and exit from the PEAR Park to US 27 will be constructed in the northern area of the site due to the upland opportunity and alignment with a residential development across the highway provided by a crossover. It is anticipated that a traffic signal will need to be requested for this location and is appropriate by FDOT design and location requirements.
7. **Upland Restoration of disturbed areas.** Native tree and plant restoration will occur in areas of the site that have been disturbed over the years. Limited disturbance has occurred so the magnitude of the project will be approximately ten acres.
8. **Wetland Restoration.** The site includes two wetland areas. One is primarily on the Gateway site and will include various improvements. Removal of exotic plants and planting of native materials will occur and educational and recreational opportunity will be established in proximity to the area. The other wetland is primarily in the main PEAR Park site but extends into the Gateway site. This area will get the same kind of restoration treatment, which includes removal of exotics and planting of native material. Approximate size of both areas is four acres.

Lake County anticipates completion of a combined Master Site Plan for the existing PEAR Park and the proposed PEAR Gateway addition during the summer of 2004. A copy of this plan will be sent to FCT for review to ensure consistency with the Management Plan.

Human intrusion into any natural setting will have an impact in a variety of ways. It is planned that regulatory/educational signs, site supervision, and proper design will prevent as much impact as possible. Best management practices will be used to offset such occurrences. Closing areas, restricting access, restoration projects in addition to the above methods will be used to maintain site integrity and vitality.

The development of user-based recreation improvements will be limited on this site. Future development of restrooms, based on user demand, may occur. Their impact should be limited due to water and sewer availability and proximity to US 27.

Alterations to the land as a result of improvements to the Gateway site will be designed and developed to the highest environmental standards. In order for this site to be used as an educational facility it is important to be able to use incorporated design standards that are beneficial or non-detrimental to the site and to the plant

and animal habitat. Knowledge of existing plant and animal communities will be incorporated into the design of new areas and of the restoration areas.

Communication with the City of Leesburg and as a part of the pending Lake County Parks and Recreation System Master Plan, the two agencies are working on the development of a trails and greenways plan that would include access to the PEAR Park either from US 27 or from the west off of CR 33. Due to the major highway and subdivision development in the area, it is uncertain how sidewalks will, or could be incorporated into the area access design.

The provision of bike racks and other bicycle friendly amenities will be provided in the design and development plan for most high use areas of the park due to the magnitude of multi-purpose paved trail in the park.

Trash cans will be an important element in the design and development of the park, especially in the high use areas.

It is acknowledged and accepted by Lake County that any proposed modifications of the Management Plan/or undertaking any site alterations or physical improvements that are not addressed in our approved Management Plan requires prior FCT review and approval.

### Landscaping

Approximately ten to fifteen acres of the Gateway site will be landscaped. This landscaping will be a combination of native plant restoration to disturbed areas and site improvement for beautification and security. As approved in the PEAR Park Site Management Plan, we will use primarily Central Florida native trees and shrubs in the restoration and beautification process. Oaks, pines, and cypress are the predominant tree on the Gateway site and will be used as appropriate. It is anticipated that the landscaping process will begin within the first year after site ownership is accomplished and will take up to three years for full completion. Areas to be landscaped are shown in Exhibit A.

### Wetland Buffer

As a part of site design and development a 10 foot buffer will be provided between paved nature trails and the wetlands, a 25 foot buffer between minor facilities and the wetlands, and a 100 foot buffer between major facilities and any wetlands.

## Acknowledgment Sign

At least one acknowledgment sign identifying the project site being purchased with funds from "Florida Communities Trust". The sign will be at least 2' x 3' in size and include the FCT logo and the year the site was acquired. The sign shall be located at the entrance to the park.

## Parking

The primary access to the site will be as per the conceptual plan in Exhibit A. This access will be at a designated crossover on SR 27 and is located in the northern area of the site. A secondary entry/exit will be on the only existing entry, which is on University Boulevard. Once the new entry from the Gateway site is established the current entry will serve as a maintenance and emergency entry/exit only. Parking spaces on the Gateway site will be limited to those designed for the picnic pavilions and are expected to total approximately 100 spaces. It is anticipated that an environmentally friendly design will be incorporated into the parking areas, where possible, through the use of pervious material. A combination of materials such as fencing, landscaping, and traffic control barriers will be used to contain vehicles in the parking areas.

At the current time there is no existing sidewalk or bike trail access to the park. Due to surrounding residential development it is anticipated that sidewalk and bike trail access will be provided in design plans and in working with proposed developers.

## Stormwater Facilities

Lake County does commit that allowance for recreational use and wildlife habitat in stormwater facilities will be an important element of design consideration on this project. Required stormwater ponds will be designed with shallow slopes without fencing in order to promote access and ease of maintenance. As a part of County code, stormwater facilities will be provided for parking areas and other development areas.

## Hazard Mitigation

Acquisition of the project site will preserve 100-year flood plain areas from commercial and residential development while providing open space and recreational opportunities in these areas. County code requires that major structures be

constructed outside of the 100-year flood plain. It is the County's intention to provide restoration and improvement to hazard areas to enable educational and recreational opportunities and awareness of this unique eco-system.

The County has no Local Mitigation Strategy for this area at this time but is working on its development in conjunction with the City of Leesburg.

A map of the site indicating the 100-year flood plain is included as Exhibit F.

### Permits

Permits required for this site may include stormwater from SJRWMD, water and sewer connection from FDEP, flood plain from FEMA, driveway and drainage connection from FDOT, environmental permits regarding gopher turtles, water and sewer, tree removal, signage, building, zoning from City of Leesburg,

### Easements, Concessions, and Leases

There are no easements, concessions, or leases associated with this site. Lake County does have a 50-year lease on the main park site with the State of Florida for development and operation of an outdoor recreation resource park.

There are no proposed or anticipated easements, concessions, or leases for the project site. It is anticipated that there could be fees associated with reservation use of the picnic pavilion on the site. No specific fee has been established at this point.

Lake County will provide FCT 60 day prior written notice and information regarding any lease of any interest, the operation of any concession, any sale or option, the granting of any management contracts, and any use by any person other than in such person's capacity as a member of the general public and no document will be executed without the prior written approval of FCT. It is also understood that prior to the execution of any document it will require prior written review and approval by FCT.

Fees collected related to the project site will be placed in a segregated account solely for the upkeep and maintenance of the Project Site.

## IV. Natural Resources

### Natural Communities

The Natural Communities on the site consist of 17.8 acres of Pine/Mesic Oak (414) habitat, 7.30 acres of Freshwater Marshes (641) and 1.06 acres of Streams and Waterways (510) - The Palatlakaha River. The overall condition of these communities is good with visible signs of human impacts. Restoration activities to these areas can improve the quality of habitat and promote bio-diversity. None of these communities are imperiled/critically imperiled. The approximate acreage of areas that will be landscaped with native vegetation are 23 acres of the unimproved pasture, 7.3 acres of freshwater marshes, and 1.06 acres of wetland areas along the Palatlakaha River.

Management techniques to protect and enhance the communities will include restoration of disturbed areas with native plants and trees. This site will be able to use prescription burning to a small degree in the appropriate areas. The amount of exotic intrusion is limited but in the restoration efforts in the uplands and wetlands that will be one of the first steps to perform. A preventative maintenance program to limit future exotic intrusion will be instigated as a part of the overall maintenance program in the park.

### Listed Animal Species

The site contains no listed animal species but does provide habitat suitable for the Sherman's Fox Squirrel. There is no habitat on the site that is identified by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as a Strategic Habitat Conservation Area. While there are no listed species on site the proposed site restoration will provide suitable habitat for such opportunity.

Lake County will submit a copy of the proposed Management Plan to FWC at the same time we submit to the State and hope to have comments back that can be incorporated into the Plan within thirty days of submittal.

### Listed Plant Species

There have been no listed plant species identified on the site. Typical existing plant species currently found on the site would include live oak, sand pine, longleaf pine, wax myrtle, bald cypress, pond cypress, holly, bahia grass, wire grass, and numerous weed varieties. With the proposed site restoration there will be opportunity for renewal of habitat.

## Inventory of the Natural Communities

Lake County will seek to initiate a biological inventory survey of natural communities on the Gateway site immediately after acquisition. It is believed that a monitoring cycle of once every two years will be sufficient to properly keep up with changes in the natural communities. The proposed park has an active volunteer organization comprised of many retired environmental professionals. It is anticipated that they will become actively involved in the monitoring process and will be responsible to report any information on identified listed species to FNAI on the appropriate forms. Forms to report new plant and animal species to FNAI will be included in the Appendix of this Plan.

## Water Quality

This site includes four small wetland ponds on the site that are in good condition and will be improved with restoration efforts during park development. The Palatlkaha River runs along the northern border of the park. This connection is very short but is extensive as it relates to the bordering PEAR Park. Stormwater runoff from US Hwy 27 will be addressed due to the fact that the subject parcel will provide areas for water improvement devices/filtration that will enhance the onsite freshwater marshes. The expected results would be the reduction of nutrients, pesticides and petroleum constituents for which treatment is currently not being done. In addition, by enhancing the hydrology on the subject parcel, the success of the proposed marsh wetland restoration project will be assured. The restoration of the surface water bodies and marshes will provide better quality nesting and foraging areas for amphibian and avian species.

## Unique Geological Features

Not applicable.

## Trail Network

The project will enhance and connect local land-based recreational trail system by extending an existing trail system and by providing trailhead and trailside facilities. This project will serve as a trailhead and destination site as a part of the Lake County Trails System and the City of Leesburg Greenway Trail Network. The site will provide an enhancement to the overall system of trails because it will provide a start/finish location, picnic tables, rest areas, water access, fitness stations, and trail information. In addition it will serve as a destination site as a part of the existing park that will provide additional outdoor recreation facilities such as restrooms, picnic facilities,

playgrounds, and educational facilities. The on-site multi-purpose park trail, which will be approximately 4.5 miles in length will connect both parks into one.

A Nature Trail will circumvent the wetland marsh on the south side of the park. This wetland is primarily in the Gateway site but extends over into the PEAR Park. This trail will be approximately one quarter to one half mile in length.

Lake County has an active trail planning process and works closely with the fourteen municipalities in the county to coordinate and cooperate on such plans. A map showing the proposed and existing trail system in Lake County is included as Exhibit G.

### *Greenways, Wildlife Corridors and Canoe Trails*

This project will provide opportunity for both aspects of greenways, wildlife corridors and canoe trail. As large open space with natural communities we anticipate that this site will become a bird corridor stopover. Design and operation of the park will include concern for both the public and wildlife use of the facility. Public usage areas will be spread so as to provide greenspace and plant restoration areas for wildlife usage.

Coordinated resource protection activities and management efforts will be coordinated by Lake County Parks and Recreation with appropriate agencies such as the Lake County Water Authority, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Forestry Division, St. Johns River Water Management District and others as appropriate. Restoration and maintenance of wetland marshes will be an important element of site development and use. Educational programs to train children and adults about the proper management and protection of habitat for listed and threatened species will be incorporated into the parks programs. A map depicting the project site and showing potential wildlife corridors and the canoe trail is included as Exhibit A.1.

## **V. RESOURCE ENHANCEMENT**

### **Upland Restoration**

The approximate acreage of the upland areas that will be replanted and maintained to restore the project site to a natural community is 23.84 acres. The restoration plan will include the clearing of the degraded areas of exotic or unwanted materials and planting of locally native species such as live oak, slash pine, long-leaf pine, loblolly pine, shumard oak, and dogwood. Supplemental plantings of native herbs and shrubs will be used to border developed areas and help create habitat. Bayhead varieties of trees and shrubs including dahoon holly, wax myrtle, blackgum, and various oaks will be used.

It is anticipated that a two-year upland restoration program will begin in late 2004. Specific areas will be identified and a site planting preparation plan will be set with the use of prescription burn or alternative methods as applicable. Site preparation will be accomplished during the first year. The installation of supplemental irrigation will be accomplished within the first year as will the selection and stockpiling of planting material. The site will be ready for planting by late 2005 and will be accomplished by volunteer organizations and Lake County staff.

Upland restoration areas are shown on the attached Exhibit A.1.

### Wetland Restoration

There are approximately eight acres of wetland marshes on the project site and these are connected over into the existing PEAR Park site. Marsh wetland restoration is planned with locally native vegetation. Areas of the site infested with exotic vegetation, such as Carolina and primrose willow and cattails will be restored to a natural state. Bald and Pond Cypress will be used in addition to locally native wetland materials to supplement the existing plants in the wetlands. The existing wetlands on the project site are in generally good condition not having extensive invasion of exotics.

Restoration efforts on the marsh wetlands will begin in early 2005 and take up to two years to accomplish. This effort will be coordinated with restoration efforts on the PEAR Park site as the wetlands are contiguous to both sites. Exotic removal will be one of the first steps in restoration. Acquisition of replacement plant material will be accomplished in the first year with planting starting in the second year of the process.

### Invasive Exotic Plants

The project site is fortunate to have had limited invasion of exotic plants in either the uplands or the marsh wetlands. Removal of the invasives will be one of the first restoration efforts to take place on the site.

Removal efforts will begin with locating and identifying specific types of invasive material. A plan and timeframe will be established to carry out the project. Use of the Exotic Pest Plant Council's list of Florida's Most Invasive Species will be used in identifying exotics on the project site. This list is provided in the Appendix of this Plan. Proper timing and awareness of animal habitat will be of prime consideration in

the planning effort. Typical removal techniques of chemical spray combined with manual and equipment removal will be incorporated into the plan. Cooperative efforts with the Lake County Mosquito and Aquatic Plant Management Section and the Lake County Water Authority will be used to accomplish this task. Potential grant and technical assistance with the Florida DEP will be sought in the process to assist with the successful completion of the task. It is anticipated that the removal effort will begin in late 2004 and take up to a year to accomplish. Revegetation of the disturbed and invaded areas will begin in late 2005.

Monitoring of exotic invasion to the site will be accomplished on a yearly basis by staff in the Parks and Recreation Section as a part of their regular park inspection program.

#### Prescribed Burn Plan

It is not anticipated that much of the project site will be suitable for prescription burning. Areas of the site that are attached to the existing PEAR Park may be in line for burning as these areas are more open and containing materials suitable to a burn.

The existing PEAR Park was recently burned and a neighborhood outreach program was used to educate and inform the surrounding residents and businesses. A strong volunteer program exists at the PEAR Park and they were instrumental in the coordination and outreach for this burn. This burn was accomplished with the cooperative effort of the Lake County Water Authority and the Florida Division of Forestry.

#### Feral Animal Program

A feral animal removal program will be established for the project site as a part of the overall PEAR Park Standard Operating Procedures. This program will be accomplished by staff on a regular basis and will begin immediately upon staffing of the park. A cooperative effort with the Lake County Animal Control Division will be a standard element of the procedures. There has been limited concern for such a program to date due to natural controls but as the park develops and more public have access to dumping animals the need will increase.

## VI. ARCHEOLOGICAL, CULTURAL, AND HISTORIC RESOURCE PROTECTION

The project site contains a site listed on the Florida Master Site File maintained by the Division of Historic Resources. This site is on the northern border and is the former railroad bed and river bridge crossing of the Palatlahaha Creek. The site is listed as #200209 with the Division. The site has historical significance as stated by the Lake County Historical Society in their support of the acquisition of the project site. They plan to partner with the County in recognition of the historic agricultural presence in this area by way of educational programs and signage in the future park. There have also been early man finds in the way of spear points and arrowheads that will be displayed in the park.

The former railroad crossing will become a protected area of the park but there is little that can be done to preserve the pilings that remain in the crossing area. Appropriate signage and educational programs will preserve the history of the site in future park development and programs. There is no historical or archaeological survey of the site planned:

Lake County will perform a cultural resources survey of any area within the project site that is proposed for development prior to the commencement of the proposed development activities in that area and will report to the Division of Historical Resources immediately if any evidence is found to suggest an archaeological or historic resource at the project site. Lake County will include in the PEAR Park Standard Operating Procedures a policy that they will coordinate with the Division of Historical Resources on the protection and management of archaeological and historical resources. Also in the PEAR Park SOP will be a policy that the collection of artifacts or the disturbance of archaeological and historic sites on the project site will be prohibited unless prior authorization has been obtained from the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. Lake County agrees that the management of archaeological and historic resources will comply with the provisions of Chapter 267, Florida Statutes specifically Sections 267.061 2(a) and (b).

## VII. EDUCATION SIGNS AND PROGRAM

Lake County is committed to providing interpretive signs intended to educate visitors about the natural environment and any known archeological and historic resources on the project site.

Lake County is committed to providing at least 24 regularly scheduled environmental or historical educational programs at the project site conducted by trained educators or resource professionals.

Types of programs intended for the site are plant and animal identification, habitat types and restoration programs, upland and wetland marsh identification, weather factors, soil identification, native plant information, prescription burns, nature crafts, nature art, and others. Target groups for educational programs would include senior citizens, special interest groups, children, school groups, scout groups, and environmental groups. These programs will be led by environmental and sciences professionals from the Lake County Water Authority, Lake County Cooperative Extension Services, Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District, Lake County Government, Lake County School Board, and retired professionals in the PEAR Association.

Educational programs have already begun on the adjacent PEAR Park site even though no formal development of the site has been completed. It is planned to use the project site to supplement these programs as soon as the site is appropriate for public use.

#### **Museum and Nature Center**

Not applicable to the Project Site.

### **VIII. COORDINATED MANAGEMENT**

The acquisition of the Project Site has long been planned to provide the gateway to the existing PEAR Park. PEAR Park is a 264-acre site located along the entire western boundary of the project site. Once the acquisition of the project site is completed they will become one entity operated by Lake County. The two sites contain connecting upland and wetland marshes that will require combined restoration efforts.

There are no developed facilities on the existing PEAR Park except for the river hiking trail and a fenced dog park. Planned facilities that will join the two sites include the entry road, hard surface multi-use trail, nature trail around the wetland marsh, a special events/athletic field, and the river hiking trail. Other planned facilities for the PEAR Park include a primitive group camping area, canoe launch, roadway, parking areas, fishing pond, scrub jay management area, community gardens, vineyard, plant and tree nursery, multi-purpose trail, and an office building. Refer to Exhibit A.2.

This Plan is being written primarily by the Manager of the adjacent PEAR Park and the same individual who wrote the Site Management Plan for that same site so it is assumed that comments will not be necessary related to this request.

## IX. MANAGEMENT NEEDS

### Maintenance

Maintenance activities that are required for the upkeep of the Project Site include hard surfaces, playground, picnic pavilion, irrigation, landscape shrubs and trees, signage, entry facilities, wetland marsh, upland, soft surface trail, fences, special event/athletic field, sports courts, observation platform, benches, trash cans, grills, and restrooms. These types of facilities involve all aspects of maintenance from regular daily cleaning and fixing, to periodic repair or replacement, preventative maintenance, and scheduled work. Work involves cleaning, painting, mowing, pruning, collecting, and many other tasks.

Lake County Parks and Recreation Section will assume primary responsibility for all maintenance aspects of the park. We will be responsible for scheduling and coordinating permanent staff, contractual labor, trades labor, and any special maintenance requirements. Our responsibility will include budget preparation, equipment maintenance, personnel, volunteer coordination, training, and all other aspects of maintenance required by the project site.

### Security

Security at the Project site will be the primary responsibility of the Lake County Parks and Recreation Section. Security problems requiring law enforcement will be coordinated with both the Leesburg Police Department and the Lake County Sheriff's Department. In general, Parks and Recreation staff will provide day to day supervision and first contact with security situations. PEAR Association volunteers will be able to assist the Parks and Recreation staff by providing the eyes and ears in the park and notifying staff of concerns or problems.

Measures and design features that will be used to deter security problems such as vandalism and theft can be fencing, gates, signage, staff visibility, law enforcement visibility, landscape barriers, and vandal resistant materials.

## Staffing

Staffing for the park will require the use of permanent full time employees to provide supervision, programming, and maintenance. These staff will be acquired over time as the needs identify themselves. One of the key responsibilities of permanent staff will be to coordinate the use of volunteers who will assist the park in many areas of responsibility. Volunteers will be able to supplement permanent staff to assist in many tasks of operation and maintenance. Staffing levels will be dependent on facility needs and budget allocation.

## X. COST ESTIMATES AND FUNDING SOURCES

### Structures and Improvements

• PHOTO	Picnic Pavilion x 2	\$200,000.
• PHOTO	Playground x 2	\$125,000.
• PHOTO	Volleyball Court x 2	\$ 2,500.
	Entry Road	\$175,000.
	Site Preparation	\$120,000.
	Irrigation	\$ 20,000.
• PHOTO	Multi-use Trail	\$250,000.
	Nature Trail	\$ 10,000.
	Utilities	\$ 25,000.
SHN	Observation Platform	\$ 12,000.
*	Special Event/Athletic Field	\$ 25,000.
•	Exercise Stations	\$ 2,500.

Funding source for these structures and improvements would come from a variety of sources including the Lake County General Fund tax based budget, Infrastructure Sales Tax Funds, Parks and Recreation Impact Fees, State and Federal Grant Assistance Programs, Florida and Lake County Boating Improvement Funds, Lake County Fish Conservation Funds, donations, and volunteer organization fund raising activities.

### Natural Resource Protection

At this point it is anticipated that activities and funding for Natural Resource Protection will come from the development and on-going maintenance process

### Resource Enhancement Activities

Wetland Marsh Restoration	\$ 30,000.
Upland Restoration	\$ 50,000.
River corridor Restoration and Trail	\$ 25,000.

Other associated activities and cost would be included in the general operating budget of the PEAR Park.

### Archeological and Historical Resource Protection

At this point it is anticipated that activities and funding for Archeological and Historical Resource Protection will come from the development and on-going maintenance process.

### Educational Program

At this point it is anticipated that activities and funding for Educational Programming will be included in the general operating budget of the PEAR Park.

### Maintenance

At this time it is difficult to anticipate the cost of maintenance based on each activity. Using a formula of \$1,500 per acre for operations and maintenance, we anticipate that this project site will cost \$75,000 per year to maintain. When combined with the overall operation and maintenance cost of the PEAR Park, that figure should prove to be reasonably accurate. The source of this funding is anticipated to come from the general operating budget of the PEAR Park and supplemented with volunteer assistance.

### Security

It is anticipated that security costs will be incorporated into the development costs and the on-going operations and maintenance costs. The source of funding for this cost will be general fund taxes, grant assistance, and volunteer assistance.

### Staffing

Specific staffing levels and timing have not been determined at this point. It should be understood that the project site will not have designated staffing but will be staffed as a part of the overall PEAR Park. As mentioned above in the Maintenance

element, operations and maintenance is estimated using a \$1,500 per acre figure and staff is figured into that formula. Funding for this responsibility would come from the general operating budget of the PEAR Park.

Summary of Cost Estimates:

Site Development, Structures and Improvements	\$967,000.
Resource Restoration, Upland and Wetland	\$105,000.
Maintenance and Operation	<u>\$ 75,000.</u>
Total Estimate	\$1,147,000.

## XI. PRIORITY SCHEDULE

The following activities are based on the planned priorities and will be developed based on the availability of funds from the Lake County Board of County Commissioners, grant assistance, and volunteer assistance.

Request comments from Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regarding Plan A copy of the draft Plan will be submitted to FWC at the same time it is submitted to FCT and comments would be expected back within ninety days.

April 2004 to July 2004

### Conduct a Biological Inventory Survey of Natural Communities

Lake County will seek to initiate a survey immediately after acquisition and anticipate no longer than one year for completion.

### Amend the Future Land Use Designation and Zoning Designation

Within one year of acquiring site.

### Exotic Removal Program

It is expected that the exotic removal program will begin in late 2004 and take up to one year to complete.

November 2004 to November 2005

### Upland Restoration

It is anticipated that the restoration effort will take up to two years beginning in late 2004.

November 2004 to November 2006

**Wetland Restoration**

It is anticipated that the restoration effort will take up to two years beginning in early 2005.

March 2005 to March 2007

**Nature Trail with Bird Observation Deck**

The nature trail will be developed in coordination with the restoration of the specific wetland marsh. Construction should be able to start in late 2006 and should be completed in one year.

August 2006 to August 2007

**River Trail and Boardwalk**

Extension of the existing PEAR Park river trail will begin in late 2004 and be completed by summer of 2005.

October 2004 to July 2005

**Special Event/Athletic Field**

Site preparation and construction of this facility could begin in late 2005 and should take up to one year to complete.

November 2005 to November 2006

**Picnic Pavilion and Associated Elements**

Site preparation and construction of the picnic pavilion, playground, and volleyball court could begin in late 2005 and should take up to one year to complete.

November 2005 to November 2006

**Multi-Purpose Paved Trail**

Funding for this facility will be a key factor in timing. It is anticipated that grant assistance will be needed as the trail will encompass the entire PEAR Park. Potential timing for starting this element would be late 2006 and would take up to one year for completion.

November 2006 to November 2007

**PEAR Park Gateway Entry Road**

Again, this will be a major development cost that will need grant assistance but will be required for a Phase I development. Parallel construction can be occurring with the FCT acknowledgement entrance sign, picnic pavilion, playground, and volleyball court and potential start time could be late 2006 and would take up to one year for completion.

November 2006 to November 2007

### Educational Programs

Educational programs will begin when the usage areas are considered safe for public access and use. It is anticipated that such programs would be able to begin in late 2005.

### PEAR Gateway Park Priority Schedule Proposal

Action	2004	2005	2006	2007
1. Comments on Plan from FWC	May			
2. Site Acquisition	July			
3. Conduct Biological Inventory Survey	July	July		
4. Amend Future Land Use and Zoning	July	July		
5. Exotic Removal Program	November	November		
6. Upland Restoration	November		November	
7. Wetland Restoration		March		March
8. Nature Trail Development			August	August
9. River Trail & Boardwalk Development	October	July		
10. Special Event/Athletic Field Development		November	November	
11. Picnic Pavilion Area Development		November	November	
12. Multi-Purpose Trail Development			November	November
13. Entry Road Development			November	November
14. Educational Programs		October		

### XII. Monitoring and Reporting

Lake County will be responsible for preparing an Annual Stewardship Report due on January 30 of each year, which evaluates the implementation of the Management Plan.

Lake County acknowledges that any proposed modification of the Management Plan and/or undertaking any site alterations or physical improvements that are not addressed in the approved Management Plan requires prior FCT review and approval.