

**SEMINOLE COUNTY GOVERNMENT
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

SUBJECT: Natural Lands and Trails Referendum

DEPARTMENT: County Manager's Office **DIVISION:** NA

AUTHORIZED BY: Cynthia Coto **CONTACT:** Donald Fisher **EXT.** 7212

Agenda Date <u>9/12/06</u> Regular <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Work Session <input type="checkbox"/> Briefing <input type="checkbox"/>
Public Hearing – 1:30 <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing – 7:00 <input type="checkbox"/>

MOTION/RECOMMENDATION:

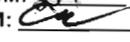
Adopt the attached Resolution placing on the November 7, 2006 ballot a referendum to determine if the voters would authorize the designation of a two-tenths (0.02) levy of one mill on all taxable property within Seminole County for a period of 10 years where a minimum of fifty (50) percent of said levy will be applied to the acquisition, operation, and maintenance of environmentally sensitive lands and the remaining levy be applied to the development, operation, and maintenance of trails / pedestrian bridges.

BACKGROUND:

At its August 22, 2006 meeting, the Board of County Commissioners authorized staff to prepare the necessary resolution (attached) to place a question on the ballot to obtain voter approval to extend the natural lands and trails programs.

At the direction of the Board, staff evaluated possible enhancements to the systems with the designation of a new 0.20 mill for a period of 10 years. Said levy would generate a minimum \$70 million over a 10 year period. With a minimum dedication of 50% of the levy to the Natural Lands Program (Board direction) and the remainder to the Trails Program, both could be greatly enhanced furthering the quality of life for the citizens of Seminole County.

The following information is very similar to that included in the August 22, 2006 memorandum; however, there is more detail with regard to operating and maintenance (O&M).

Reviewed by:	
Co Atty:	
DFS:	
Other:	
DCM:	
CM:	
File No:	<u>R 47</u>

NATURAL LANDS PROGRAM:

At the Board's direction, staff identified 8 priority areas totaling 33,700 acres (please see Exhibit A) for potential acquisition and inclusion in the Seminole County Natural Lands Program (SCNLP). Priority areas include, but would not necessarily be limited to:

- Econ – St. John's (19,000 acres)
- Econ River (900 acres)
- Little Big Econ (1,660 acres)
- Black Hammock (4,300 acres)
- North Lake Jesup (4,400 acres)
- Mullet Lake (2,400 acres)
- Spring Hammock (300 acres)
- Wekiva (800 acres)

With the proposed designated millage, staff estimates that 4,000 additional acres could be added to the program, pending leveraging of Federal and State grants, and funding from other partners. Further, these properties, as well as current properties owned by the County, could be maintained at a comparable level as they are today.

For comparison purposes, other Florida counties have implemented the following funding of their programs:

Program	Type	Total Funds	Duration
Alachua County	Ad valorem	29 million	20 yrs
Brevard County	Ad valorem/bonds	55 million	20 yrs
Broward County	Ad valorem	230 million	20 yrs
Duval County	.5 percent sales tax	50 million	29 yrs
Hillsborough County	Ad valorem/bonds	100 million	20 yrs
Lake County	Ad valorem/bonds	36 million	20 yrs
Orange County	Ad valorem	125 million	
Osceola County	Ad valorem/bonds		
Palm Beach County	Ad valorem/bonds	250 million	20 yrs
Pasco County	1.cent sales tax		
Sarasota County	Ad valorem/bonds	250 million	20 yrs
Volusia County	Ad valorem/bonds	162 million	20 yrs

MANAGEMENT COSTS NATURAL LANDS

With the conclusion of the existing acquisition program, staff has been working on long term management costs. To minimize impact to the general fund, the Natural Lands Endowment Fund, and a unique volunteer program, have been utilized to defray management costs. The County compares to Statewide averages as follows:

Average land management costs	Statewide	SCNLP
Cost per acre (including salaries)	\$323.95	\$52.00*
Total costs (operating and capital)		\$94.00
Staff per 1000 acres	4.14	.91
Properties per staff	1.30	2.60

*Figures based on 6,622 acres of land currently managed by 4 full time and 2 part time SCNLP staff.

Current and Proposed Annual Program Cost

Regardless of whether a designated millage is approved, there are ongoing O&M costs associated with the current Natural Lands Program. Below is a comparison:

Item	Existing	Current Needs**	Proposed***
Capital*	\$250,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$300,000.00
Management	\$340,000.00	\$450,000.00	\$650,000.00
Total Budget	\$590,000.00	\$700,000.00	\$950,000.00
Per Acre Cost	\$89.00	\$105.00	\$90.00

*Capital figures do not include land purchase costs. **Adjusted costs including immediate additional needs required for management of existing properties acquired. *** Based on an additional 4,000 acres.

The anticipated annual cost difference between the current program, when fully operational, and the proposed program with a dedicated millage would be approximately \$250,000.

TRAILS PROGRAM:

The trails component of the 2000 Referendum identified \$20 million for various projects. Major projects contemplated from this referendum have been encumbered and should be built out in 2008.

However, due to escalating land and construction costs, it may not be possible with current funding to complete all of projects contemplated at the time of the Referendum. Examples of these projects, as well as new projects, are below. Also, Exhibit B indicates proposed trail locations that are priority projects that can be funded within the designated millage; Exhibit C indicates proposed trail locations (shown in blue) that are of lower priority, and more than likely, there would not be adequate funding to complete these with the designated millage.

Trails

- Northern and Southern Extension to Seminole Wekiva Trail
- Completion of critical links within the Cross Seminole Trail
- Candyland Trail
- Sanford Riverwalk

Pedestrian Overpasses

- Cross Seminole Trail at Ronald Reagan Boulevard
- Seminole Wekiva Trail at State Road 436
- Cross Seminole Trail / Aloma Avenue at Hall Road

MANAGEMENT COSTS - TRAILS

Historically, the County has leveraged 50 cents on the dollar from State and Federal grants for trail projects. Should this success continue, the County should be able to complete the projects referenced in Exhibit B as well as operate and maintain the entire trail system, resurface trails where needed, and perform bridge inspection. After that period, the maintenance and operation, resurfacing, would need to be rolled into the General Fund.

For consideration, there exists current and future O&M costs with the existing Trails Program. Costs associated with this include grounds maintenance and minor repairs, resurfacing every 10 years, and bridge inspection every 2 years. Staff estimates that once all of the trail facilities are fully operational, the annual cost for O&M will be \$1.1 million per year. Should additional projects be added as a result of the referendum, the additional annual cost would be \$400,000.

DESIGNATED MILLAGE

It is anticipated that dedicating 0.20 mills over a 10 year period would conservatively generate over \$70 million and provide the funding needed to further enhance both the Natural Lands and Trails Programs. In the first year (2008), the cost for a \$175,000 home with a \$25,000 homestead exemption is estimated at \$30.00. This assessment would be included in the 10 mill cap as part of the Countywide millage.

At the Board's direction, the County Attorney could also evaluate the feasibility of including a designated millage by ordinance into the Seminole County Code. Said ordinance could identify how the 0.20 mills will be appropriated. Although this ordinance could be changed, it would provide a statement to the citizens of the Board's commitment to the Natural Lands and Trails Programs.

PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

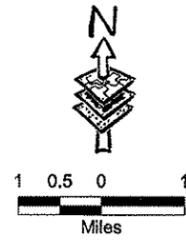
Past public information programs have included a mailed brochure to all registered households, ads in the newspaper, SGTv public service announcements, the County website, billboards, and the speakers' bureau (please see Exhibit D). The Board directed that the budget for this element be \$100,000.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

The following is a list of key points with regard to the proposal above:

- The proposal is for a dedicated millage of two-tenths (0.2) of one mill for 10 years;
- The question to the voters is a straw ballot;
- This is a pay-as-you-go proposal. No bonds will be issued; however, nothing would prevent commercial paper obligated against non-ad valorem sources;
- Proposed millage is not inclusive of current debt service payments for the 1990 or 2000 Referenda;
- Millage is proposed to be used for the acquisition, construction, operation and maintenance of natural lands properties and trail / pedestrian bridge corridors and may be designated in the Seminole County Code;
- Properties that are valuable for aquifer recharge may be included for purchase as natural lands properties;
- There is recognition that the extent to which lands are purchased and trails are constructed depends on the ability to leverage dollars; and
- The public information budget is established at \$100,000.

Seminole County Vacant Lands Conservation Targets



Legend

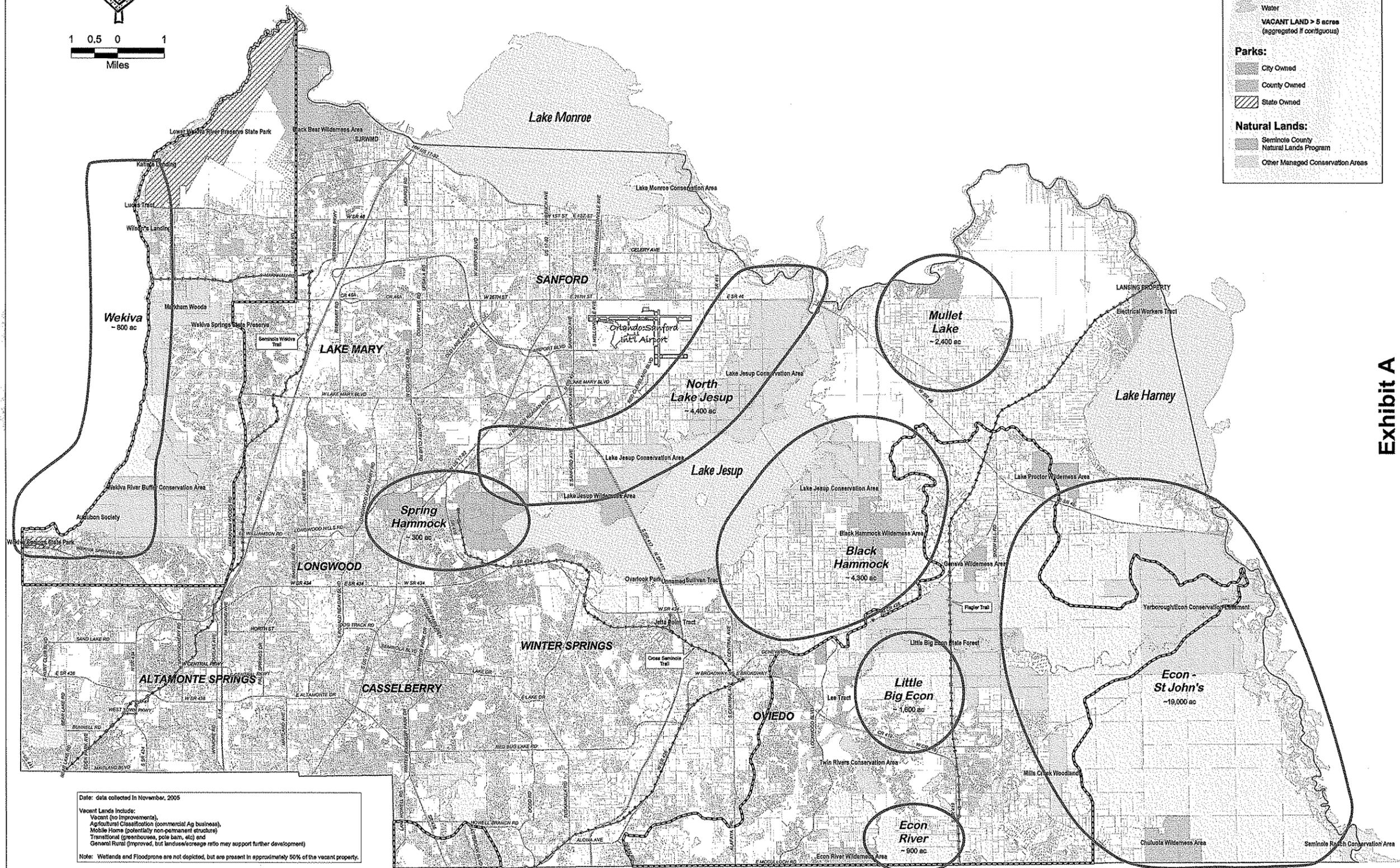
- Showcase Trails
- Wetland Protection Area
- Econ Protection Area
- Water
- VACANT LAND > 5 acres (aggregated if contiguous)

Parks:

- City Owned
- County Owned
- State Owned

Natural Lands:

- Seminole County Natural Lands Program
- Other Managed Conservation Areas



Date: data collected in November, 2005

Vacant Lands include:
 Vacant (no improvements),
 Agricultural Classification (commercial Ag business),
 Mobile Home (potentially non-permanent structure)
 Transitional (greenhouses, pole barn, etc) and
 General Rural (improved, but landuse/acreage ratio may support further development)

Note: Wetlands and Floodprone are not depicted, but are present in approximately 50% of the vacant property.

Exhibit A

Seminole County Trails Program Preliminary Priorities 2006

- A. **Seminole Wekiva Trail Overpass**
SR 436
- B. **Cross Seminole Trail Overpass**
Ronald Reagan @ Longwood Lake Mary Blvd
- C. **Cross Seminole Trail Overpass**
Aloma Ave & Hall Rd

- 1. **Seminole Wekiva Trail**
Extension to Orange County
- 2. **Seminole Wekiva Trail**
Longwood Markham to SR 46
- 3. **Cross Seminole Trail**
Layer Elem. School to N. of Old Sanford Oviedo Rd
- 4. **Cross Seminole Trail**
Ronald Reagan to Greenway Blvd (Power lines)
- 5. **Longwood**
Candyland
- 6. **Sanford**
Riverwalk – 17-92 to CR 15 (Upsala)

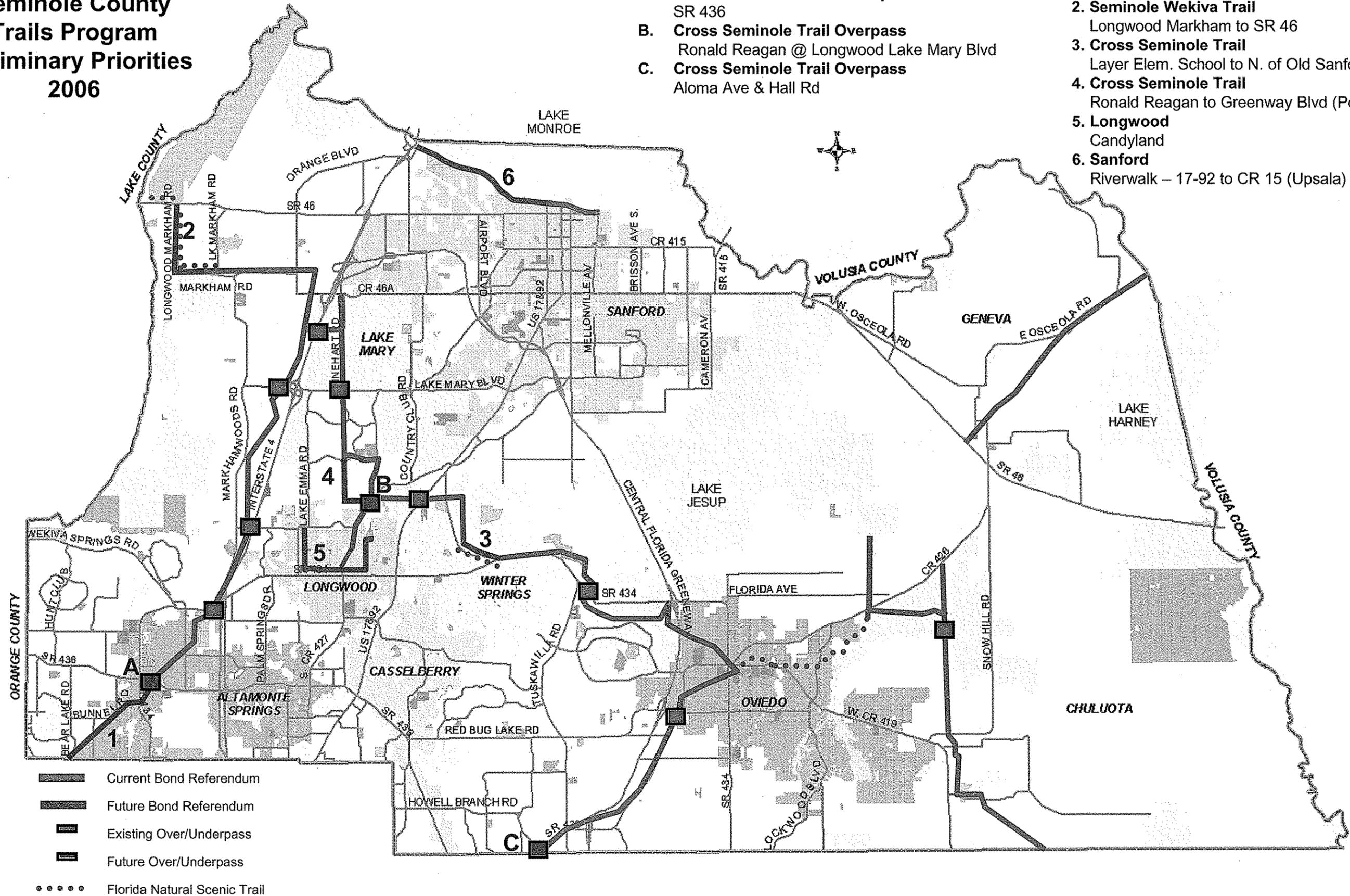
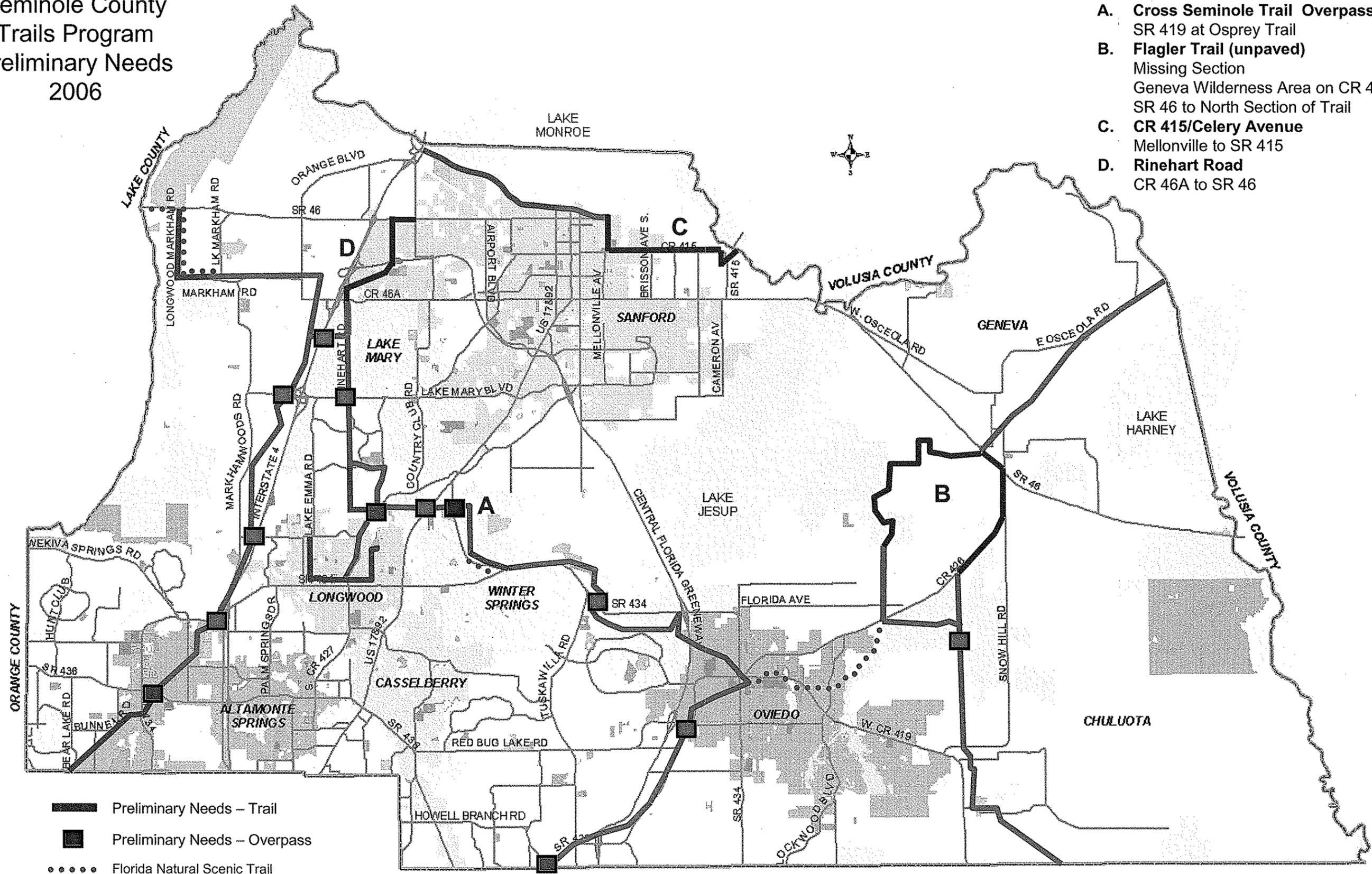


Exhibit B

Seminole County
Trails Program
Preliminary Needs
2006



- A. Cross Seminole Trail Overpass
SR 419 at Osprey Trail
- B. Flagler Trail (unpaved)
Missing Section
Geneva Wilderness Area on CR 426 to
SR 46 to North Section of Trail
- C. CR 415/Celery Avenue
Mellonville to SR 415
- D. Rinehart Road
CR 46A to SR 46

- Preliminary Needs – Trail
- Preliminary Needs – Overpass
- Florida Natural Scenic Trail

Exhibit C

**2006 Trails/Natural Lands Bond Referendum
Public Information Plan**

Informational Item	Description	Approximate Cost	Approximate Total Cost	Important Dates
Legal Advertising	2 Legal Ads to run in Orlando Sentinel	Orlando Sentinel: est. cost is \$275	\$550	Send on 9/14 for ads to run on 9/28 and 10/19.
Flyer Mailed to Absentee Ballot Requestors (Black Ink Printing)	Mail out letter from County Manager trifolded as a self mailer targeted at citizens requesting absentee ballots (12,000 pieces)	Postage: \$3,240, Printing: \$1,000 - inhouse, Mailing: \$1,117	\$5,357	Print week of 9/19-9/22. Mail out 9/26.
1/2 Page Newspaper Display Ad - 7.7" x 15.6875" (4 Columns Wide by 16" Depth)	Run on Thursdays and Sundays	Orlando Sentinel: Thursday- \$768 per ad; Sunday- \$1,094 per ad	2 Thursday ads = \$1,536 and 3 Sunday ads = \$3,282	Deadline for paper is 10/13. Ad runs 10/19, 10/23, 10/26, 10/30, 11/2, and 11/4.
	Thursday Ad	Oviedo Voice: Thursday- \$431.55 per ad	2 Thursday ads = \$864	Deadline for paper is 10/20. Runs 10/26 and 11/2.
	Thursday Ad	Sanford Herald: \$630 per ad	2 Thursday ads = \$1,260	Deadline for paper is 10/20. Runs 10/26, and 11/2.
	Total of Display Ads			\$9,066
Full Color Brochure Mailed to Seminole County Registered Voter Households (Approximately 150,000)	One-sheet 11" x 17" trifold, full bleed brochure providing the ballot language and explaining the proposed bond referendum (160,000 pieces)	Printing of 160,000 pieces (10,000 extra to be used in item below): \$11,307; Mailing&Sorting: \$3200; Postage: \$40,500	\$55,007	Art to printer on 9/15. Printing complete by 9/29. Delivers to Mailer on 10/2 with target drop in mail on 10/10
Distribution of Brochure to Public Buildings in Seminole County	Extra 10,000 brochures are placed in County buildings or used in Speakers' Bureau below.	Included in printing price above.	None- In house project utilizing County staff and existing resources	Distribution starts 10/2
Flyer Inserted in Seminole County Water Bills (Black Printing on Colored Paper)	Print of 40,000 flyers to be inserted in Seminole County Utility Bills	Internal printing in Copy Center.	\$1,400	Print week of 9/26 for insertion in bills starting 10/2
Speakers' Bureau	County Staff available to speak to civic, professional and community groups. Prepare PowerPoint presentation for use by all speakers.	N/A	None- In house project utilizing County staff and existing resources	Pre-schedule in September with engagements starting on 10/2
Billboard	Based on available stock at Clear Channel or CBS/Viacom	One month rental, art to be designed in-house	\$2,000	Month of October
SGTV Advertising	1. Public Service Announcement- 60 second segment detailing basic information and who to contact, 2. SGTV Bulletin Board	N/A	None- In house project utilizing County staff and existing resources	On air starts 10/10
County Web Site	Informational Campaign put on County Internet with links to Natural Lands and Trail Information including brochure, PSA, photos and other video.	N/A	None- In house project utilizing County staff and existing resources	Information posted on 10/10
Total Program Cost			\$71,256	

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION WAS ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SEMINOLE COUNTY, FLORIDA, AT THEIR REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2006.

WHEREAS, the Seminole County Board of Commissioners recognizes the need to plan for future growth and in that endeavor, recognizes the benefits to acquire and improve environmentally sensitive, water resource, outdoor recreation lands, and trail development; and

WHEREAS, the history of Seminole County is marked with efforts to conserve the County's unique ecological character and to preserve valuable ecosystems for future generations; and

WHEREAS, it remains the goal of Seminole County to conserve, maintain, and where necessary, restore the natural environment and provide access for the enjoyment and education of the public; and

WHEREAS, Florida's groundwater, surface waters and springs are under pressure due to population growth and economic expansion and resources are needed to ensure that sufficient quantities of water are available to meet the current and future needs of the natural systems and citizens of the state; and

WHEREAS, access to public lands supports a broad range of outdoor recreational opportunities and the development of necessary infrastructure, where compatible with the resource values of and management objectives for such lands, promotes an appreciation for Florida's natural assets and improves the quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the need for high-quality resource based outdoor opportunities, greenways, trails, and open space have not been fully met by previous acquisition programs and additional emphasis on acquiring, protecting preserving and restoring open space, greenways, and public access is necessary; and

WHEREAS, acquisition to protect the integrity of ecological systems provide multiple benefits, including preservation of habitat, recreation space for urban as well as rural areas, and water recharge; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Seminole County desires to submit to the qualified electors of Seminole County the question as to whether a majority of voters agree that an additional ad valorem tax of two tenths (0.2) of one mill be levied for the purpose of acquisition, operation, and maintenance of environmentally sensitive lands; and for the construction, operation, and maintenance of trails and pedestrian bridges; and

WHEREAS, the Seminole County Supervisor of Elections is the elected constitutional officer who is the chief election officer of Seminole County and who is responsible for conducting elections in accordance with State law; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners is authorized by Florida Statutes Section 125.01(1)(y)(2006) to "place questions or propositions on the ballot at any primary election, general election, or otherwise called special election, when agreed to by a majority vote of the total membership of the legislative and governing body, so as to obtain an expression of elector sentiment with respect to matters of substantial concern within the county."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SEMINOLE COUNTY, FLORIDA, THAT:

Section 1. Findings.

(A) This Resolution is adopted pursuant to the County's Home Rule Charter, Chapter 125, Florida Statutes, Chapters 100 and 101, Florida Statutes, and other applicable provisions of law.

(B) It is desired to authorize the annual levy of an additional ad valorem tax of two tenths (0.2) of one mill on all taxable property in Seminole County for a period of 10 years to fund the acquisition of water resource and environmentally sensitive land for conservation and public use, and operation and maintenance of the same, and fund the development of trail corridors/pedestrian bridges including operation and maintenance.

(C) The recitations of the preamble are hereby adopted as findings herein.

Section 2. Election Ordered.

An election be and is hereby ordered to be held in Seminole County, Florida, on November 7, 2006, to obtain an expression of elector sentiment regarding the levy of an additional ad valorem tax.

Section 3. Ballot.

The Supervisor of Elections of Seminole County is hereby authorized and directed to place on the ballot for the General Election to be held on November 7, 2006, the following ballot title and question:

Ballot Title

Authorization of an additional tax for environmentally sensitive lands, trails and pedestrian bridges

Ballot Question

Shall Seminole County levy an additional ad valorem tax of two tenths (0.2) of one mill on all taxable property within Seminole County for a period of ten (10) years where a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of said levy will be applied to the acquisition, operation, and maintenance of environmentally sensitive lands; and the remaining levy be applied to the development, operation, and maintenance of trails and pedestrian bridges?

YES _____

NO _____

Section 4. Publication of Referendum and Notice.

The Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners shall cause the notice required by Section 100.342, Florida Statutes (2006), to be published in accordance with law.

Section 5. Policies and Procedures.

The County will utilize the Natural Lands Committee and the Greenways and Trails Committee to make

recommendations as to the purchase of natural lands properties and the selection of trail corridors, respectively.

Section 6. Acquisition Goals.

Acquisition goals for natural lands shall be consistent with Part 4, Chapter 190 of the Seminole County Code, including the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands for the purpose of providing aquifer recharge.

Section 7. Public Access.

Lands shall be managed and maintained to the extent practicable in such a way as to ensure a balance between public access and restoration and protection of their natural state and condition. Public access, as well as public use, will be determined in the management plans.

Section 8. Severability.

In the event that any word, phrase, clause, sentence or paragraph hereof shall be held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such holding shall not affect any other word, clause, phrase, sentence or paragraph thereof.

Section 9. Effective Date.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its passage and adoption. The Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners shall provide the Supervisor of Elections with a certified copy of this Resolution.

ADOPTED this 12TH day of September, 2006.

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SEMINOLE COUNTY, FLORIDA

MARYANNE MORSE
Clerk to the Board of
County Commissioners of
Seminole County, Florida.

By: _____
CARLTON D. HENLEY, Chairman

Date: _____