

**AUGUST 18, 2016**

**PORT ST. JOE, FLORIDA**

**WORKSHOP**

The Gulf County Board of County Commissioners met in the Emergency Operations Center on this date in a workshop with the following members present: Chairman Ward McDaniel, and Commissioners Joanna Bryan and Jerry W. Barnes.

Others present were: County Attorney Jeremy Novak, Deputy Clerk Leanna Roberts, Chief Administrator Don Butler, Building Official George Knight, Central Services Director Lynn Lanier, County Planner Brett Lowry, Gulf County RESTORE Act Coordinator Warren Yeager, Jr., and Staff Assistant Mike Aiken.

Chairman McDaniel called the meeting to order at 1:59 p.m., E.T.

**HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN**

County Attorney Novak noted the workshop is a public meeting; being recorded and minutes taken. Chief Administrator Butler provided a presentation packet regarding HCP (Habitat Conservation Plan) <copy provided to Clerk for the record>. He discussed the various maps included in the presentation packet. Chief Administrator Butler discussed the Endangered Species Act of 1973; reporting that the HCP covers sea turtles (green loggerhead, leatherback & kemp's ridley), birds (rufa red knot & piping plover), and the St. Andrew Beach Mouse. He discussed the HCP goals and benefits. Chief Administrator Butler reported that T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joe Peninsula State Park, William J "Billy Joe" Rish Recreational Center, Eglin Air Force Base Cape San Blas, City of Port St. Joe, WindMark Beach DRI, Ovation Subdivision, projects previously reviewed and approved by U.S. FWS pursuant to Section 7 of the ESA (Endangered Species Act), and other State and Federal land ownerships including Pig Island and Richardson Hammock are excluded from the proposed HCP. He discussed the distribution of habitats suitable for the beach mouse and avoidance and minimization existing today in the County. Chief Administrator Butler then discussed the new avoidance and minimization measures to be implemented through the proposed HCP. After discussion regarding mitigation measures, Chief Administrator Butler discussed County Alternatives #1- Not Action, #2 - Issuance of one thirty (30) year Section 10(a)(1)(B) permit to the County for the incidental take of covered species for the covered activities described in the County HCP, #3 - No action landward of the CCCL/Florida Beaches HCP waterward of the CCL, and #4 - Gulf County HCP landward of the CCCL/Florida Beaches HCP waterward of the CCCL. He stated that the HCP Committee recommendation to the Board is to approve Alternative #2. Chief Administrator Butler reported that staff is evaluating costs associated with the new requirements and will bring a recommendation to the Board regarding permitting costs. County Attorney Novak stated that some version of the HCP needs to be adopted by Gulf County; reporting that the laws have been in place, but now it will be enforced at a local level. Chief Administrator Butler discussed the need for the Board to submit the HCP on to the environmental agencies and ask for their feedback. He stated that, with the HCP,

an ordinance will need to be adopted. Rebecca Pfaller, of FL FWC stated they are here to answer any questions the Board may have. Commissioner Bryan requested that a red line be put in place so the changes to the plan can be identified. She discussed her concerns regarding the County not being able to fund the enforcement of the currently adopted Ordinances. Jennifer McGee, of FL FWC discussed her concerns regarding enforcement; stating that enforcement should be laid out in the plan. Kristi Yanchis, of U.S. Fish and Wildlife stated she needs figures regarding the acreage proposed per year. Chief Administrator Butler reported the County will create 98 acres of new habitat. Upon inquiry by Chief Administrator Butler, Ms. Yanchis, of U.S. Fish and Wildlife stated that the County should adopt a final draft then submit to the agencies for review. Kent Rimmer, Representative for Defenders of Wildlife stated the HCP that is adopted ensures that the endangered species will remain in Gulf County. He reported they have three (3) concerns regarding this proposed plan: 1) the mitigation plan does not provide adequate mitigation; 2) the avoidance and minimization strategy are mischaracterized as mitigation and; 3) the proposed plan underestimates the amount of incidental take that is going to be made. Mr. Rimmer stated there needs to be additional mitigation, in addition to the beach renourishment. Discussion followed between Mr. Rimmer and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Yanchis regarding mitigation and endangered species. Jennifer McGee of FL FWC discussed her concerns regarding the mitigation within the proposed HCP. Upon inquiry by FL FWC Jennifer McGee, Chief Administrator Butler reported that the difference between Alternate #2 and #4, noting with Alternate #4 the Gulf County HCP would be landward of the CCCL and Florida Beaches waterward of the CCL; with Alternate #2 the Gulf County HCP would cover the entire beach, dunes and scrub. After further discussion regarding mitigation, fees, beach renourishment, and low density rate, Commissioner Bryan stated that if the County doesn't put a plan in place to protect what we have, we will lose it. County Attorney Novak reported there is language in the plan that addresses mitigation fees; stating there is a cost associated with living on the coastline. He stated the County wants to control the cost. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Yanchis discussed the option of implementing impact fees. After further discussion regarding fees and annual assessments, Pat Hardman, President of Coastal Community Association discussed restoring beach sand, protecting the habitat, and the Property Owners Act; stating the Board needs to adopt the plan and submit it for review. Following further discussion and upon inquiry by CCA President Pat Hardman, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Yanchis stated that if the County submits an adopted HCP in September, then comments could be provided in December, 2016. After further discussion, CCA President Hardman discussed funding avenues to help move the HCP forward. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Yanchis stated she will review funding and grant sources, but funding will not be available until October 1, 2016. After discussion, Building Official George Knight reported the County will evaluate what fees will be implemented. He stated this plan will be monitored and enforced by the Building Officials, not the County's Code Enforcement. After discussion, County Attorney Novak discussed the timeline in presenting the proposed HCP to the Board for consideration in September and then in three (3) months receive an initial agency review.

There being no further business, the meeting did then adjourn at 3:51 p.m., E.T.

**WARD MCDANIEL  
CHAIRMAN**

**ATTEST:**

**REBECCA L. NORRIS  
CLERK OF COURT**