

ADAMS RANCH STEWARDSHIP SENDING AREA



Submitted on behalf of



Family Lands Remembered, LLLP

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New Directions In Planning, Design & Engineering

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Executive Summary

The Rural Lands Stewardship Area (RLSA) was adopted by St. Lucie County as an innovative program designed to protect and conserve natural resource areas and agricultural lands and to direct growth away from important ecological areas to more suitable locations (Figure 1). Relying principally on incentives to protect natural resource areas, cultural heritage values and agriculture, the provisions of the RLSA encourage the three landowners, which are the subject of the application, to voluntarily protect and conserve environmentally valuable land, while achieving public benefits without public funding (for either acquisition or management). The mechanism to achieve these public benefits is through the voluntary designation of Stewardship Sending Areas (SSAs) from which Stewardship Credits may be generated and sold.

The purpose of the RLSA program, from the perspective of the SSA Applicant, is to encourage the voluntary preservation and private stewardship of natural resources and retention of agricultural and rural uses in a sustainable rural environment. The recording of a Stewardship Easement documents the removal of the Stewardship Credits. A Stewardship Easement is distinguished from a conservation easement in that a conservation easement is a method used primarily for the purpose of environmental land preservation. By contrast, a stewardship easement removes land use layers in exchange for credits, leaving the landowner all land uses not so removed. The Stewardship Easement enables the landowner to retain the right to conduct economically viable activities on the SSA lands, so that it may continue to operate, protect, and conserve the agricultural and environmental benefits associated with the SSA lands.

One of the primary components of the SSA designation application is the Natural Resource Index Assessment Report. The Natural Resource Index Assessment details the environmental conditions and credit generation for the first SSA in St. Lucie County, which occurs on Adams Ranch. This SSA is a significant achievement of land conservation, as it documents the designation of 11,891.49 acres of land within the RLSA as a Stewardship Sending Area. To better put the value of the SSA in perspective, this area is approximately twice as many acres as have been acquired by the County through its environmental lands program. Approximately 91 percent of the land within the Adams Ranch SSA occurs within a Habitat Stewardship Area (HSA), Hydrologic Stewardship Area (HYSA), or Water Retention Area (WRA) overlay as

defined in the Adams Ranch Stewardship Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Land Development Code Amendment (Stewardship Report).

Within the Adams Ranch SSA, the current potential for residential uses, general and conditional uses, earth mining and processing uses, and Agricultural – Group 1 (which encompasses the more intensive types of agricultural uses) will be removed from 8,460.19 acres, while retaining Agricultural – Group 2 uses (less intensive agricultural activities) and Restoration and Natural Resources Uses (see Appendix B).

On 3,431.30 acres of the Adams Ranch SSA, the applicant will remove and restrict in perpetuity the potential for residential uses, general and conditional uses, and earth mining and processing uses while retaining Agriculture – Group 1, Agriculture – Group 2 uses and Restoration and Natural Resources Uses.

Using the credit formulas in the St. Lucie County RKLSA Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations, there are 35,043.69 Stewardship Credits to be generated by the designation of 11,891.49 SSA acres as a result of the elimination of the most intense Land Use Layers and the granting of Agricultural Incentive Credits and Cultural Heritage Incentive Credits. Table 1 shows Stewardship Credits generated from AG 1 and AG 2 areas, Agricultural Incentive Credits, and Cultural Heritage Incentive Credits for all three landowners in the Adams Ranch SSA. Through this application, upon approval by the BOCC and recording of the Stewardship Easements, 35,043.70 stewardship credits will be transferred to the Cloud Grove property. A separate Stewardship Receiving Area (SRA) application will be filed for the Cloud Grove property, seeking approval of a 5,000 acre Town SRA.

This SSA application and the referenced SRA application will serve to implement the first use of St. Lucie County's RLSA Overlay, in furtherance of and in accordance with the policies established by the RLSA program.

Natural Resource Index Assessment

This Natural Resource Index Assessment (Assessment) is submitted in support of the Rural Lands Stewardship Area Overlay District – Stewardship Sending Area Designation Application (Adams Ranch SSA) on behalf of Family Lands Remembered, LLLP. This Assessment is consistent with the requirements of the Rural Lands Stewardship Area Zoning Overlay District,

St. Lucie County Land Development Code (LDC) Section 4.05.07. The intent is to eliminate certain land uses in order to protect and conserve natural resources, cultural heritage, and retain agricultural activities, in exchange for transferable Stewardship Credits (Credits) that can be used to entitle compact development at the Stewardship Receiving Area (SRA) in the RLSA Overlay.

The purpose of this Assessment is to establish the boundaries of the first Stewardship Sending Areas (SSAs) within St. Lucie County to be known as the Adams Ranch SSA, as described in Figure 2; to document the Natural Resource Index value scores assigned to the Adams Ranch SSA; to propose the elimination of certain land use layers; and to calculate the resulting number of Credits being generated by the foregoing. Specifically this Assessment:

- ❑ Verifies the Natural Resource Index Value scores assigned during the RLSA overlay designation are valid through aerial photographs and mapping;
- ❑ Establishes that if the Natural Resource Index Value scores assigned during the RLSA overlay study have been changed, the Index Value scores as of the date of the SSA Designation application are documented;
- ❑ Quantifies the acreage of agricultural lands, by type of use, included within the SSA;
- ❑ Quantifies the acreage of non-agricultural lands, by type of use, included within the SSA; and
- ❑ Quantifies the acreage of all lands by type of use within the SSA that have an Index value greater than 1.4.

Verification of Index Values

This Assessment includes documentation that refines the Natural Resource Index value scores that were assigned during the Stewardship Report. Of the three Natural Resource Index Factors on the Stewardship Credit Worksheet (see Appendix C), only two, Land Use-Land Cover and Listed Species Habitat are prone to change over time or require mapping refinements. Additionally, the Stewardship Overlay Designation Index may also experience some minor adjustments during an SSA application process as a result of the site-specific “ground-truthing” of boundary lines defined as part of the required verification process.

Aerial photography (Figure 4) and extensive field-truthing completed in late 2005 provided the basis for review of the Adams Ranch SSA land cover as documented in the Stewardship

Report. An assessment of land use/land cover changes since the RLSA study period was determined by comparing recent aerial photography with the FLUCFCS mapping provided in the Stewardship Report, interviewing the landowners, and via site inspections in fall 2006 and winter 2007. No land use/land cover conversions have occurred within the proposed Adams Ranch SSA since the completion of the Stewardship Report (Figure 7).

Some small hammocks located in pastures were called out as separate hammocks (as opposed to hammocks embedded in pastures), which changed the Natural Resource Index values for a very small percentage of the acreage within the Adams Ranch SSA.

The listed species data used for this Assessment include Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) data from 2004, USFWS data from 2004, and FWC listed species data from 1994 and 2002. Other species data were from site-specific observations made by Mike Adams of Adams Ranch, EW Consultants, and WilsonMiller consultants. Maps of listed species occurrence records are provided in Figure 8.

Figure 9 documents the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service's (USDA-NRCS) soils map unit delineations for Adams Ranch SSA.

Documentation of Index Value Scores

Figure 5 documents the Natural Resource Index values for the Adams Ranch SSA. These scores are based on the aforementioned FLUCFCS, listed species, and soils data for the site.

Quantification of Agricultural Lands

There are 3,431.30 acres of Agricultural - Group 1 (AG 1) lands and 8,460.19 acres of Agricultural - Group 2 (AG 2) lands being identified within the Adams Ranch SSA (Table 2) (Figure 10).

The identified AG 1 lands consist primarily of active pasture and row crops, as well as active citrus groves. Those lands identified as AG 2 lands consist primarily of natural communities, pastures, and managed wetlands. Table 2 shows acreage of each agricultural type, and the total agricultural acreage for each landowner.

Quantification of Non-Agricultural Lands

There are no non-agricultural lands being protected within the Adams Ranch SSA boundary.

Quantification of Lands Type With Index Value Greater Than 1.4

The Adams Ranch SSA includes 2,736.04 total acres of AG 1 lands with a NRI index greater than 1.4. There are 8,270.54 acres of AG2 where NRI values are greater than 1.4. The total lands with index value greater than 1.4 is 11,006.59 acres. Table 3 breaks down the total of agricultural lands by landowner.

[Support Documentation](#)

Legal Description with sketch and survey

The Legal Description of Lands can be found in Appendix A for Adams Ranch, Inc., Alto Adams, Jr., and ARCCO. Figure 2A is the survey Sketch of Description for Adams Ranch, Inc., Figure 2B is the Sketch of Description for Alto Adams, Jr. where as Figure 2C is the Sketch of Description for ARCCO.

HSA, HYSA, and WRA Acreage Calculations

The total acres of the RLSA Overlay can be found in Table 4. The Habitat Stewardship Area (HSA) within the entire Adams Ranch SSA comprises 8,273.61 acres. The Hydrologic Stewardship Area (HYSA) within the SSA is 2,291.12 acres. The Water Retention Area within Adams Ranch SSA has a total of 268.19 acres. Table 4 also shows the acreage for each stewardship area by landowner.

RLSA and SSA Overlay Map

Figure 3 is the RLSA Overlay Map delineating the area of the RLSA Overlay Zone being designated as an SSA.

Aerial Photograph of SSA

Figure 4 depicts an aerial photograph of the area being designated as an SSA.

Natural Resource Index Map of SSA

Figure 5 depicts the Natural Resource Index (NRI) Map of the areas being designated as the Adams Ranch SSA. Figures 5A, 5B, and 5C depict the Adams Ranch, Inc., ARCCO of St. Lucie, Inc., and Alto Adams, Jr. parcels, respectively. Figures 6, 6A, 6B, and 6C are maps of the areas with NRI values greater than 1.4 for the overall SSA, Adams Ranch, Inc., ARCCO of St. Lucie, Inc., and Alto Adams, Jr. parcels, respectively.

FLUCFCS Map with aerial photography

Figure 7 depicts the site-specific FDOT Florida Land Use Cover and Forms Classification System (FLUCFCS) map for the area being designated as an SSA on an aerial photograph.

Listed Species Map of SSA

Figure 8 depicts listed species occurrences from United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Fish Wildlife Conservation Commission, and Florida Natural Areas Inventory, as well as site-specific observations by the landowners and consultants for the area being designated as the Adams Ranch SSA.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Soils Map of SSA

Figure 9 depicts the United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) Soils map for the area being designated as the Adams Ranch SSA.

Explanation of changed NRI Value scores since adoption of Overlay

With the exception of some small hammocks located in pastures classified as separate hammocks (as opposed to hammocks embedded in pastures), which changed the Natural Resource Index values for a very small percentage of the acreage within the Adams Ranch SSA, no NRI values have changed since adoption of the RLSA overlay. The hammocks FLUCFCS code changed from either 211 (improved pastures), 2111 (hydric improved pastures) or 212 (pastures with individual cabbage palms) land use values to 4251 (cabbage palm-oak hammock) land use values. Additionally all these hammocks were then coded as AG 2 while the surrounding pastures remained AG 1. These changes were made in response to concerns

by County Environmental Resources Division staff that the hammocks should receive greater protection than afforded them under AG 1 status.

There is an approximate 40-acre site within Sections 22 and 27, Township 35 South, Range 37 East that is not included within the SSA boundary. This area encompasses a Gopher Tortoise Easement, which was previously granted by the owners. A copy of the Gopher Tortoise Easement and associated sketch is found in Appendix E.

Acreeage Calculations by Index Values and Credits

The number of NRI credits generated by AG 1 and AG 2 areas can be found in Table 2. This table shows the NRI Stewardship credits each landowner will receive in AG 1 and AG 2 areas.

Agricultural Incentive Credits

The number of credits granted for Agricultural Incentive Credits is 2,745.04 for AG 1 and 7,614.17 for AG 2. Table 5 presents the Agricultural Incentive Credits for each landowner. Land Development Regulation 4.05.07.B.2 provides Agricultural Incentive Credits in the form of Agricultural Stewardship Credits. LDR 4.05.07.B.1. lists the formula to be used for calculating Agricultural Stewardship Credits. The terms Agricultural Incentive Credits and Agricultural Stewardship Credits will be used interchangeably in this application. Figure 10 depicts the areas designated as AG 1 and AG 2 for purposes of the agricultural incentive credits.

Cultural Heritage Credits

The total Cultural Heritage Incentive Credits for the Adams Ranch SSA is 5,945.75 credits. Of those credits, 1,715.65 are of AG 1 areas, and 4,230.10 are AG 2. Table 6 shows the Cultural Heritage Incentive Credits for each landowner.

Legal Description

Figure 2

Map of SSA

Figure 11

Number of Credits

Table 6

Archeological and/or Historical Analysis

Appendix F

Land Use Layers Removed and Retained

The more intensive land use layers (residential uses, general and conditional uses, and earth mining and processing uses) as described in the Land Use Matrix (Appendix B), are being permanently removed from the Adams Ranch SSA in exchange for the Stewardship Credits described herein.

The AG 1 uses are depicted in detail in Appendix B and allow more intensive agricultural activities such as production of crops including row crops, citrus, and landscape nursery; agricultural services; agricultural labor housing; farm products warehousing and storage; forestry; noncommercial research facilities, and a variety of other uses as set forth in the RLSA Overlay in the County's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code. Currently in the AG 1 areas shown on Figure 10, the aforementioned activities are permitted to continue, and expand to the limits allowed by applicable permits. Once the SSA is established, expansion of AG 1 uses will not be allowed beyond the boundary of the AG 1 portions of the Adams Ranch SSA. In addition, the applicant, in response to concerns from the County's Environmental Resources Division¹, has voluntarily proposed restricting a significant portion of the AG 1 lands to limited "rotational" row crop use, where no permanent (e.g., citrus) plantings may be done, and where row crop use is limited to 25% of the lands so designated at any given time.

AG 2 uses are depicted in detail in Appendix B and include less intensive agricultural activities such as ranching, livestock raising and animal specialties, sod, pasture and grazing; cultural, educational, and ecotourism uses and support facilities; excavation incidental to agricultural operations; single-family detached dwelling unit or mobile home (1 unit per 500 acres); and telecommunication towers as set forth in the RLSA Overlay in the County's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code. In the AG 2 areas shown on Figure 10, such activities are permitted to continue, and expand to the limits allowed by applicable permits. These less-intensive uses continue to be allowed or may be expanded within both AG 1 and AG 2 areas.

¹ Regarding more intense agricultural activities abutting hammocks

Table 2 quantifies the agricultural land use layers voluntarily being removed within Adams Ranch SSA totaling 11,891.49 acres.