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Contact: Betsy Clayton, APR/CPRC
Communications Director
Lee County Government
239-826-4606
bclayton@leegov.com

Lee Commissioners award contract for planning, design and permitting on Larry Kiker Preserve

Fort Myers, FL, Oct. 19, 2021 – The Lee Board of County Commissioners voted Tuesday to award a contract for Phase 1 of the planning, design and permitting for the Larry Kiker Preserve, which is in southeast Lee County and is the second-largest Board acquisition in the history of the county's Conservation 20/20 program.

When completed, the preserve will serve multiple functions – water quality, flood control, wildlife habitat and passive recreation. Components could include shared-use paths, hiking trails, a nature center, fishing piers, a campground and scenic overlook towers. The county's goal is to create a visitor experience similar to a national park.

Many opportunities for public input to the county will occur during the planning process.

Water management-related functions will be handled by Lee County Natural Resources. Recreational and conservation-land management portions of the work will be handled by Lee County Parks & Recreation. The county is using Tourist Development Tax funds for portions of the planning and construction process.

The \$1.8 million contract the Board approved is with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. It includes developing regional water management features, public access, trails, campground, educational center and associated amenities. Phase 1 is expected to be complete in two years. Phase 2 will be initiated through a separate Board agenda item to develop construction plans, specifications and cost estimates. Costs for Phase 2 will be dependent on the final plans developed in Phase 1.

Acquired in December 2017, the Larry Kiker Preserve is about 3,922 acres. The ecologically significant property is east of Interstate 75, south of Corkscrew Road, north of Wellfield Road and within southeast Lee County's Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area. Hidden Cypress Preserve borders Larry Kiker Preserve to the south, and Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) land to the east.

There are currently more than 31,000 acres within Conservation 20/20, Lee County's land acquisition and management program. Conservation lands help the county protect drinking water, enhance water quality, provide nature-based recreational opportunities, protect areas from flooding and provide wildlife habitat. For more information, visit www.Conservation2020.org.

To receive Lee County Government updates about Kiker Preserve, Conservation 20/20 lands and other Lee County topics, sign up for the newsletter at <https://www.leegov.com/resources/newsletters>.