



Jekyll Island Environmental Assessment Procedure (EAP):

Report summarizing the findings of the EAP Committee considering the construction of a boardwalk and trail associated with the Carolina Willow Dune Swale that lies across Beachview Drive from Camp Jekyll.

Date of EAP Committee meeting: 12/07/2016

EAP Committee members

Ben Carswell, Director of Conservation, JIA
Cliff Gawron, Director of Landscape and Planning, JIA
John Marr, General Manager, JIA Georgia Sea Turtle Center
Richard Chewning, Director, Camp Jekyll, University of Georgia
Steve Newell, Jekyll Island resident, University of Georgia (retired)
Jacob Thompson, Biologist, Georgia DNR – Nongame Conservation Section

Project under consideration

A 170 linear-foot, elevated boardwalk, to be constructed to meet ADA requirements, will lead to a 12x16 observation deck overlooking the Carolina Willow Dune Swale habitat. This feature will give children of all abilities program access to view this conservation-priority habitat and participate in education programs in this environment. Additionally, a proposed dirt surface foot-path, following the ridge line between the slough and Beachview Road, was considered, along with maintenance of this feature and the existing dirt trail network.

Summary assessment

All proposed new features were viewed favorably by the committee members. The committee discussed land-use classifications (developed/undeveloped) at length and all were comfortable with advising that the boardwalk and deck feature should not require reclassification of any land. Although some of the footprint of this feature will be situated upon land classified as undeveloped, the committee agreed that the elevated construction, preventing impact on the canopy or understory functions of the undeveloped forest, along with the precedent of undeveloped classification for beachside dune-crossovers and overlook features (South Dunes Picnic Area), justifies this recommendation. As a “dirt footpath fewer than 6-feet in width”, the proposed ridge trail would also meet the definition of undeveloped land.



The committee agreed that the existing dirt trail network would be brought back to a usable state of maintenance by 4H staff, while JIA Conservation staff would take the lead in constructing the new dune ridge trail. The existing dilapidated slough crossing boardwalk should be removed to the extent practicable and the committee was in agreement that 4H may rebuild this crossing at its own expense provided that the structure meets building code requirements and addresses safety considerations about alligators. JIA Conservation and 4H staff will work cooperatively to maintain the completed trail network with the crossing structure, and two existing short raised-boardwalk features over low terrain on other parts of the trail, falling under 4H responsibility and the new ADA boardwalk/platform falling under JIA's responsibility. The existing interpretive sign that describes the unique features of the environment, including the wetland slough, should be moved from its current location to be adjacent to the new boardwalk, near its start.

Additional Recommendations

JIA staff should consult with the project contractor to determine if any durable alternatives to pressure-treated lumber exist that could be considered, and procured within budget, for the boardwalk and platform structure. Additionally JIA Conservation and Research staff should review whether any literature exists regarding chemical leaching from treated lumber, that may inform this and future applications in and near sensitive habitats. Conclusions from these communications and review should be shared with 4H for consideration regarding other structures in the trail system.