



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 25-00628

Agenda Date: 8/12/2025

Agenda Item Name:

Authorization to dedicate and re-name Hammock Loop Trail at Turkey Creek Preserve in honor of Bob Simons

Presenter:

Andi Christman, Land Conservation Program Manager, 352-264-6803

Description:

Authorization to dedicate and re-name the Hammock Loop Trail at Turkey Creek Preserve in honor of Bob Simons.

Recommended Action:

1. Approve and adopt Resolution 2025-XX (Exhibit 1) re-naming the Hammock Loop Trail at Turkey Creek Preserve in honor of Bob Simons.
2. Authorize staff to plan a public dedication event for the trail re-naming.

Prior Board Motions:

On July 9, 2024 the BoCC made a motion directing staff to review projects the Bob Simons had involvement in for potential opportunities for naming of a facility in his honor.

Fiscal Note:

Interpretive materials including a kiosk and trail signage will be installed at Turkey Creek Preserve. Estimated cost \$5,000 with funding support anticipated from Alachua Audubon Society Chapter of Audubon Florida. Adequate funding exists in 001.41.4160.537.52.00 (operating Supplies) and the operating category in 261.41.5587.537. (Land Conservation Fund- Turkey Creek Hammock) for interpretive materials costs.

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

For decades before his passing in 2024, Robert W. (Bob) Simons served the community in Alachua County and beyond selflessly through his pioneering efforts to conserve and protect the most special places in the county and state. Bob spent significant time voluntarily working on conservation issues in the public interest. Land Conservation Program staff have reviewed projects and facilities to identify the most suitable and appropriate candidates for naming in honor of Bob Simons. The Hammock Loop at Turkey Creek Preserve has been assessed by staff and key community members to be an ideal candidate.

Some primary reasons for this recommendation include:

- 1) Bob led the effort for the State of Florida to purchase and manage the lands that now form San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park, adjacent and ecologically connected to the County's Turkey Creek Preserve. For over two years, Bob worked on the acquisition of the ten parcels that now comprise the state park. Bob mapped and assessed the ten privately-owned parcels and worked with the landowners to convince them to sell their land to the state. He attended legislative and cabinet meetings in the capitol to convince the state to buy the land, and through his hard work and commitment, and that of many others, San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park was created. At the statewide level, Bob contributed significantly to the protection of Silver Springs State Park, River Rise State Park, Fakahatchee Strand State Park, Tosahatchtee Preserve, and the Pinhook Swamp.
- 2) Bob contributed to the Alachua County Forever (ACF) program in many ways, including: critical involvement in the comprehensive inventory of natural areas in the county which set initial lands priorities for the ACF program. Bob served as a citizen volunteer for many years, from its inception, on the Land Conservation Board (LCB) for Alachua County, including at the time of the LCB's consideration and recommendation of Turkey Creek Preserve's acquisition. In addition, Bob also served for many years on the City of Gainesville's Tree Advisory Board.
- 3) Turkey Creek Preserve is one of the most-visited Alachua County preserves, enjoyed by all citizens, from families to dedicated birders. With the preserve's already high popularity, and the grant-funded observation boardwalk soon to be installed along the current Hammock Loop trail, the preserve provides an ideal location to honor Bob's local and statewide significance, and educate visitors on his conservation legacy and the impact that individual action can have.

A public dedication will be planned following completion of construction of the new observation boardwalk project located along the Hammock Loop Trail, currently in the RFP process.