



FLORIDA WEST COAST RESOURCE
CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT
(RC&D) COUNCIL, INC.

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Geraldson Community Farm: Conceptual Management Plan

*Prepared by the Florida West Coast
RC&D Council*

**Approved by the Manatee County Board of County
Commissioners on September 26, 2006.**

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Geraldson Community Farm Conceptual Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

"In the years to come, we'll be given the opportunity to share with the public the successes of restoration, education about agriculture and the peaceful beauty of a botanical garden. All three will be working in concert to provide a public service that's needed if we're going to maintain our connection to nature and to agriculture and the business of both."

-- Charlie Hunsicker, Director,
Conservation Lands Management
Department about the Geraldson
Community Farm in the Bradenton
Herald, 09/23/06.

On March 1, 2005, the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) voted to purchase the approximately 20-acre Geraldson Farm in Bradenton for the creation of a community farm.

With the Geraldson Farm purchase, the County has the opportunity to integrate two priorities: the preservation of natural areas such as environmentally sensitive lands with the preservation of green space in productive agriculture. Productive agriculture also provides an opportunity for greater social benefit by providing fresh, healthy food for diverse community members. Additionally, the farm's location adjacent to Robinson Preserve and the Palma Sola Botanical Park provides an excellent opportunity for complementary outdoor recreation and education/demonstration at these facilities.

On May 3, 2005, staff of the Conservation Lands Management and Agriculture and Natural Resources/Extension Service departments proposed to work with members of the community, the Palma Sola Botanical Park Foundation, the Manatee Historical Commission, and members of the agricultural community who were interested in maintaining the Geraldson's family legacy in the form of a community-operated working farm. Geraldson Community Farm has also been designated as a location for education, outreach, sustainable farming demonstrations, celebrations of the farm's agricultural heritage and other community events.

The Florida West Coast RC&D, under contract with Manatee County, has prepared this conceptual management plan for the property, a consensus-based document involving the above-named participants and others in the community.

The Conceptual Site Plan drawing was approved by the consensus of the working group on August 23, 2006, followed by the Conceptual Management Plan document on August 30, 2006.

This plan was approved by the Board of County Commissioners on September 26, 2006.

The Florida West Coast RC&D Council

The Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes strong communities and sustainable agriculture by bringing people together to create healthy local community food systems. RC&D is a program of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and receives partial operating support and an experienced staff person to serve as the RC&D's full-time Coordinator.

Goals

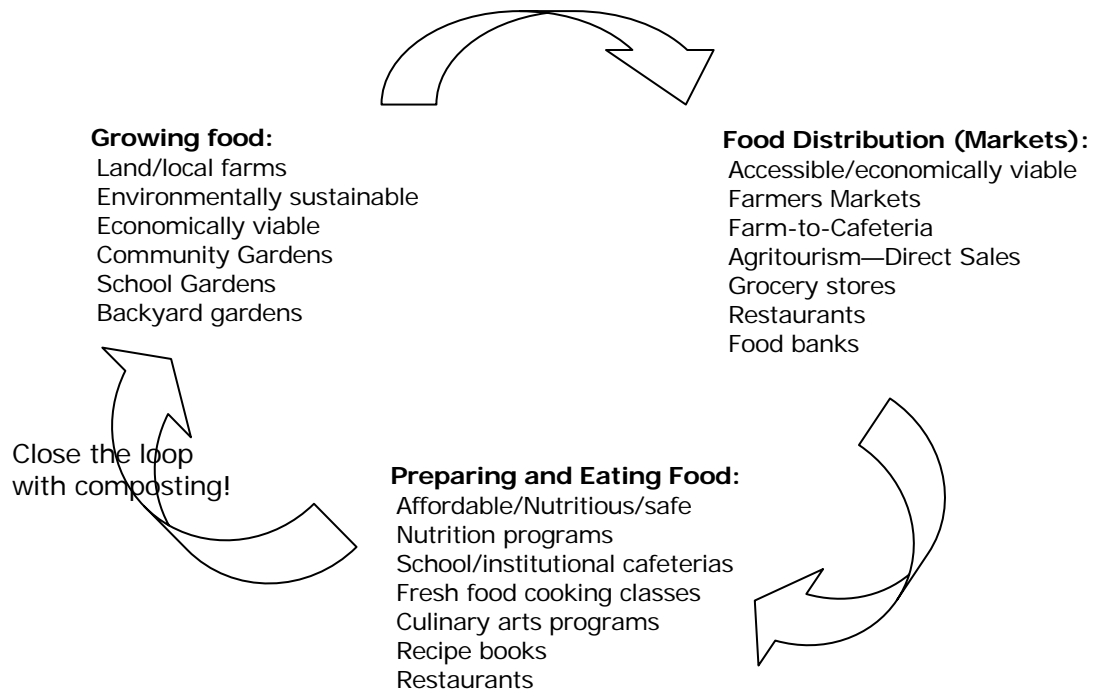
The RC&D has prioritized creating secure, healthy, affordable agricultural and food systems that reflect economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Need

In communities like ours, farmland is diminishing rapidly due to the urgent need for housing and increasing land values. To keep agriculture viable, it is critical that we build a strong agriculture-community connection which contributes to a vibrant local economy and stable local food system. Agriculture is a valuable local resource that preserves our open space, protects our rural heritage, increases local economic prosperity, helps conserve natural resources, and provides food security at the local and national level.

A secure, healthy and affordable agricultural-food system reflects an economic, environmental and social balance in the community. The RC&D is committed to creating this balance by providing leadership through our programs and advocacy efforts, developing partnerships, coordinating funding, and assisting with project planning and management.

COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM DIAGRAM



Major Program Areas:

- **Community Farm Building**
Developing and demonstrating different models of community farm operation in our 4-county area by providing technical assistance, project development, consulting, and community farm incubation services.
- **Agricultural Economic Development**
Addressing the need for viable business opportunities in the creation of a vibrant local food system by developing a network of strong entrepreneurs pursuing their passions through business ventures.
- **Agricultural Integrated Water Resources Management**
Addressing the need for water conservation in the growing of food and horticultural products by taking a business-friendly approach to integrated water resources management in agricultural operations.
- **Community-Identified Food and Agriculture Projects**
Creating opportunities for inspired community members to contribute by assisting in the development of partnership-based community food and agriculture projects.

Advocacy

The RC&D is an active pro-agriculture participant on community committees and works closely with our counties to promote and support local agriculture, leading the effort to develop complimentary approaches to agricultural land and open space preservation or acquisition.

- Member of local county Agriculture Policy Councils
- Member of the Manatee County Rural Land Stewardship Committee
- Member of the Sarasota Science and Environment Council (SEC)
- Member of the Sarasota County Economic Development Council (EDC) Life and Environmental Sciences Cluster

Success Stories

The RC&D's work has helped raise the level of awareness on the importance of agriculture in our communities, resulting in several successful efforts and helping to build stronger community support for local agriculture.

- Partnered with Hillsborough, Sarasota and Manatee County Extension Service to develop a well-attended Small Farms Workshop.
- Provided technical assistance to Manatee County to insure eligibility for receiving Federal funds under the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program.
- Developed the Natural Capitalism Seminar featuring Rocky Mountain Institute, co-presented with the Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation.
- Worked with the Sarasota County Agriculture Policy Council to develop comprehensive plan recommendations in support of agriculture.

Current Programs

Manatee Agricultural Reuse Supply (MARS) Farm Connection Grant Program:

RC&D has received over \$8 Million in Federal funding to connect agricultural users to the reclaimed water transmission line in Manatee County and to develop innovative approaches to water management for agricultural operations. The grant program will provide access to groundwater alternatives and increase efficiencies to help address water issues impacting agriculture in our area, part of the Southern Water Use Caution Area

(SWUCA). RC&D is providing technical assistance to agricultural growers, managing the project, and administering the grant program.

Farmworker Laundry Project:

Through a \$10,000 grant provided by the NRCS, the RC&D will be working with the Latino Community Network to address laundry facility deficiencies in the farmworker population. This effort will initiate the implementation of the Latino Community Network's farmworker needs assessment. Convenient laundry facilities or services will allow farmworkers to clean clothing exposed to pesticides before entering the home, where children and other family members could come in contact with contaminated clothing and develop serious health problems.

As the nonprofit entity selected to develop the conceptual management plan for Geraldson Community Farm, the RC&D takes seriously its charter as a community-based organization with a responsibility to provide benefit to the community and to operate in accordance with its values of Service, Action, Excellence, Openness/Inclusiveness, Integrity, and Beauty/Harmony.

The Florida West Coast RC&D is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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Deliverables for this Agreement

Stage	Work Product	Deliverable
Stage 1	Research existing community farm models, costs, operating procedures, and possibilities for the Farm.	A prepared presentation that will be used in the community meetings along with a summary report.
Stage 2	Two to four community meetings will be held to present the options for the Farm and to receive feedback and recommendations from the community.	Facilitators report on the minutes of the meetings with summaries of community input and suggestions.
Stage 3	Develop a working group to provide guidance, fundraising, support, and expertise in the development of the community farm.	A list developed with the formal written support of community organizations that have agreed to be active in a working group.
Stage 4	Based on the research of models, community input, and partnership priorities, a draft conceptual management plan will be developed and forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for their consideration.	A draft report document with a conceptual management plan based on community input presented for approval to the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners.
Stage 5	The consensus-based conceptual management plan forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for their consideration.	Final report document and drawings for the management plan for the farm.

Stages 1-3 have been completed and submitted to Manatee County Government.

Project Overview

With the purchase of the Geraldson Farm property, Manatee County Government is providing leadership to other communities around the country who want to preserve urban farmland as productive agricultural land. Although there are established pro-farm efforts in many areas of the country, including active farmland protection programs and farmland trusts along with many successful publicly-owned agricultural demonstration and education farms, the development of community-owned urban farms as thriving farming businesses with added social benefit is cutting edge.

Format of this Plan

This combination of community farm/business planning and natural resource planning results in a management plan that contains many of the natural resource and education elements of a typical management plan developed in the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) format, but also presents additional information such as the framework for a community farm/business plan, which this document refers to as the "Farm Operations Plan," and includes farming, marketing, fundraising, and community participation.

Another category that we have added is under "Proposed Business Structure" which describes the interrelationships between major functional areas on the farm property. Also, because the entire property has been cleared of natural habitats and has been used for field farming for generations, the extensive analysis of natural communities usually found in a management plan is not applicable here. The primary focus of this plan will be on managing the property for farming, agricultural demonstration/education and community participation.

Community Farm Research

As part of its contract with Manatee County to develop this plan, the RC&D researched successful community farm models from all over the country. A few of the farms studied are publicly owned, although many have been set up as nonprofit organizations and many are family-owned farms. Research showed that the foundation of most economically and socially successful community farms is the Community Supported Agriculture, or CSA, model of community-based farming. The first two CSA's were started in the U.S. in 1986 at the Indian Line Farm in Massachusetts and the Temple-Wilton Community Farm in New Hampshire.¹ In 1990, there were 60 farms with CSA's in the U.S., growing to over 1200 today.²

The CSA model provides weekly shares of the harvest to CSA members who have paid up-front for their shares for the season. This provides some working capital for the farm operation as well as sharing the inherent risks of agriculture, e.g. weather events, between the farmer and the consumer. Many CSAs offer some need-based scholarships for seasonal shares as well. One farm in Connecticut offers organizational shares in addition to individual shares. The organizational shares are available to nonprofits that provide food, such as a soup kitchen, with part of the cost being covered by the nonprofit, and part of the cost covered by funds raised by the farm's fundraising volunteers. CSAs typically offer events, opportunities for volunteers, newsletters with farm notes and recipes, and farm-study internships in addition to seasonal harvest shares.

¹ Robyn Van En Center for CSA Resources

² Robyn Van En Center for CSA Resources

CSA's have been shown to be economically viable on small-scale farms, using sustainable farming practices that make good neighbors for urban locations, providing healthy local food for community members, providing opportunities for community participation, preserving and celebrating our agricultural heritage, creating educational opportunities, keeping us connected to the land and providing a place around which community ties can flourish.

In addition to CSA's, successful community farms diversify their business strategies by marketing to local restaurants, selling at farmer's markets, developing value-added products, holding community events, setting up a farmstand, or employing other creative market-driven strategies. The University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program defines sustainable agriculture as integrating "three main goals—environmental health, economic profitability and social/economic equity." A sustainable agriculture approach with a CSA/direct marketing business model for a county-owned farm balances the social trust of publicly-owned land with a viable economic model that will provide revenues towards the operating budget of the farm.

The Working Group

Additionally, the RC&D assembled the core Geraldson Farm Working Group, made up of Charlie Hunsicker, Director of the Manatee County Conservation Lands Management Department; Brenda Rogers, Director of the Manatee County Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources/Extension Service, Janet McAfee, President of the Palma Sola Botanical Park Foundation Board; Laura Morton, Florida West Coast RC&D Coordinator; Mike Sosadeeter, Treasurer of the Florida West Coast RC&D Board; Britton Miller, Florida West Coast RC&D Program Manager; Owrang Kashef, Florida West Coast RC&D Agricultural Engineer; Rick Martinez, President of Organic Integrity International consulting firm and Executive Director of Sweetwater Organic Community Farm in Tampa. Farm neighbor Nick Baden served as a valued advisor to the group.

The Working Group was charged with providing guidance for the development of the Geraldson Community Farm Conceptual Management Plan & Conceptual Site Plan. The Working Group collaborated on a draft Conceptual Site Map and components of the draft conceptual management plan, incorporating research, partnership needs, early community input, BCC goals, and farm business plan requirements, to prepare for the community meetings.

Community Input

For community input, the RC&D held two community meetings at the Palma Sola Botanical Park, and provided surveys on the RC&D website, the Extension website, at the Palma Sola Botanical Park Annual Plant Sale, at Sarasota's Efest and the Pinellas Living Green Festival.

Notice of the meetings appeared in articles in the Bradenton Herald and Weekly Planet, on the RC&D website, on the Extension website, on the Local Harvest website, on the County's Conservation Lands Management Department website, at the Palma Sola Botanical Park, at two churches near the farm, as a grocery bag stuffer at Good Earth Natural Foods at 6717 Manatee Ave. West, at the Loop Road Farm Market, and at Publix 7308 Manatee Ave. West. Press releases were sent to local newspapers. Invitations were sent to stakeholders such as Farm Bureau, the Manatee River Soil and Water Conservation District, and other community organizations.

The first meeting, held on June 13, 2006, included community members targeted by the Working Group as stakeholders, community leaders, members of the Geraldson family, and other interested local residents. 16 people attended the first meeting, and were given a presentation on the history of the County's purchase of the farm, the County/working group goals for the farm, community farm research, conceptual site plan draft, and opportunities for community participation. The attendees from this meeting were given materials to hand out to their friends, neighbors and other interested people to encourage them to attend the next community meeting.

The second community meeting was held on June 26, 2006, also at Palma Sola Botanical Park. There were 20 attendees, with the same agenda as the first meeting. Several members of the Geraldson family also attended the second meeting. We received 17 completed surveys from the two community meetings.

After compiling and incorporating the comments and survey information from the community meetings, the RC&D completed the final drafts of the Geraldson Community Farm Conceptual Management Plan and Site Plan. The Conceptual Site Plan drawing was approved by the consensus of the working group on August 23, 2006, followed by the Conceptual Management Plan document on August 30, 2006, for subsequent presentation to the BCC for approval.

Many Thanks to our Working Group Members

The RC&D has greatly enjoyed working with the partners and stakeholders involved with the development of this plan. We want to recognize our RC&D Board member and Secretary/Treasurer, Mike Sosadeeter, who volunteered his skills as a landscape architect and many hours of his time to develop the conceptual site plan drawing for the farm. Farm neighbor Nick Baden has also been a great help to the process, offering his knowledge of and insights into the farm and surrounding area, attending two of the working group meetings and both community meetings.

Finally, we want to express a special thank-you to the dedicated core Working Group members who gave many evenings, offered informed and thoughtful insights, and worked very hard to provide a uniquely special community farm for the citizens of Manatee County:

Charlie Hunsicker
Brenda Rogers
Janet McAfee
Mike Sosadeeter
Laura Morton
Britton Miller
Owring Kashef
Rick Martinez

PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT

Even before the purchase of the Geraldson Farm property in 2005, the purpose of a community farm at the site began to take shape. Through discussions with the Geraldson family and early visioning with the Conservation Lands Management Department and Board of County Commissioners, compatible goals and objectives for the purchase and implementation of the future community farm emerged, establishing the County's key management objectives to serve as guiding principles for the development of the farm.

The Conceptual Management Plan recommendations were developed using five primary sources as the foundation of the plan:

1. Key management objectives from the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners.
2. Additional goals and objectives from the Geraldson Community Farm Working Group.
3. Key components of successful community farms derived from extensive research of community farms around the country, including academic studies of national trends.
4. Localized research to determine community interest, solicit community input, and determine appropriate local/regional application of community farm concepts.
5. Additional professional recommendations from the Florida West Coast RC&D.

1. Key Management Objectives

Manatee County Government has stated the following key management objectives for the Geraldson Community Farm property:

- Working Community Farm
- Preserves green space in productive agriculture
- Community-operated
- Education outreach
- Sustainable farming demonstrations
- Community events pertaining to Manatee County's agricultural heritage
- Community-based living history farm
- Educational opportunities developed by the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department/Extension Service
- Consensus-based management plan
- Financially independent entity
- Celebrates the history of the Geraldson family farm

2. Additional Goals from the Working Group

Additionally, the following complimentary goals were established by the Geraldson Farm Working Group:

- To integrate Palma Sola Botanical Park participation into the farm's master plan
- To be a good neighbor as an urban farm
- To evaluate options for community outreach and serving people in need
- To incorporate a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program
- To include cooking and gardening classes, and to a lesser extent, farming and arts/crafts classes
- To include community garden plots
- To include a farm bookstore
- To include opportunities for farming history events such as a mule day and antique farm implement demonstration
- To include a farmstand or make produce available at local farmer's markets

3. Key Components of Successful Community Farms

The RC&D's research focused on farms that had features in common with Geraldson's such as small acreage, a suburban location, agricultural history, local government/public ownership when possible, active community involvement, and a good business track record. Successful farms were market-based in their approaches to the combination of approaches they selected, which greatly contributed to their success. Farms studied employed one or more of the following components:

- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- Organic farming systems
- Newsletter/website
- Community events
- Volunteer opportunities
- Farmstand with produce, artisan/local agricultural goods, farm crafts, books
- Classes for children and adults such as cooking, gardening, farm crafts
- School programs to promote good eating habits and teach children about where food comes from
- Attractive, welcoming appearance
- Being a good neighbor
- Many set up as independent nonprofits, many family owned
- Apprenticeships for future small-scale farmers
- Presence at local farmer's markets
- Community garden plots

Five farms were also selected as particularly good models from which to develop a conceptual model for Geraldson Community Farm:

- Sweetwater Organic Community Farm, Tampa, Florida (www.sweetwater-organic.org)
Successful nonprofit CSA on 6 acres in suburban Tampa, waiting list for CSA, school programs, internships.
- Worden Farm, Punta Gorda, Florida (www.wordenfarm.com)
Successful organic family farm with CSA on 55 acres, waiting list for CSA, strong farmer's market presence, school tours, internships.
- The Center for Urban Agriculture at Fairview Gardens, Goleta, California (www.fairviewgardens.org)
Successful nonprofit community farm with CSA, sells to restaurants, strong farmer's market presence, classes in cooking and gardening, large farmstand.
- Codman Farm, Lincoln, Massachusetts (www.codmanfarm.org)
Successful nonprofit farm on town-owned land. Very popular community gardens.
- Holcomb Farm CSA, Granby, Connecticut (www.holcombfarmcsa.org)
Successful nonprofit-run CSA with community component – offers organizational shares to nonprofits specializing in providing food.

4. Localized Research

Community input was a primary resource for localized research. At the two community meetings, questions were encouraged and addressed throughout the discussion. Comments from the community were extremely positive and were focused primarily on the plans for growing and distributing produce, project funding, coordination with the Palma Sola Botanical Park, and staffing requirements. Farmers in attendance offered suggestions about ways to improve drainage on the site, which were incorporated into the . There were no concerns raised about the plans for the property. In fact, community members in attendance were very enthusiastic about the development of the farm and were interested in participating in the farm in some manner.

17 surveys were completed by community members attending the two community meetings. People were asked about the types of activities they would like to participate in at the farm:

- 76 percent of participants are interested in participating in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and a range of 47-59 percent are interested in purchasing produce in other ways such as a farmstand or farmer's market.
- 53 percent of participants are interested in cooking classes, 59 percent are interested in gardening classes, and about 25 percent are interested in farming and arts and crafts classes.
- 65 percent would like community garden plots, which will be good information for Extension in setting up their program. And no one at the meeting was interested in a farm internship, which was not surprising since most attendees were focused more on purchasing fresh food and tending gardens.

- A smaller percentage wanted community events at the farm, only 35 percent, so this will be an area that will need to be investigated a little farther to find out what types of events would appeal to people. The same number would like to help with a historical exhibit at the farm.
- 47 percent would visit a farm bookstore.
- We were also pleased to see that 41 percent of people would like to volunteer for farm tasks and help with fundraising. These are the people we need to cultivate early on!

Survey respondents gave us comments as well. Here's what people had to say:

- "I think making the farm organic is the biggest priority, in fact, not to be extreme, I can't really see how the project would be worth doing if it is not. It is the best option for personal health and environmental health, and I think that should include any community garden plots if they are offered. If I could have everything I wanted, I would ask for honey production and goat raising for goat cheese and milk and yogurt. I honestly think this farm could make a huge difference in our community and support it completely (as long as it's organic!) Everyone I have talked to about it is excited.
- "Wonderful. Thank You!"
- "Great way to go, and grow!"
- "I have read about community gardening in Sarasota, and it sounds exciting."
- "I teach agriculture education at Palmetto High. There may be possibly things we can help with."
- "Good presentation and a great venture."

In addition to community interest, localized research also included discussions with local farmers and NRCS specialists to determine site-specific requirements, and will be included in the farm plan, later in this document.

5. Additional RC&D Recommendations

Additionally, the RC&D is recommending that the following practices and considerations be integrated into the farm:

- Sustainable farming practices
- Integrated Water Resources Management

Sustainable Farming Practices

An important aspect of the farm will be to employ sustainable farming practices to initially grow organic fruits and vegetables, reducing the need for chemical use and providing a safe environment for neighbors, visitors and farm employees, but particularly for children, pregnant women, those with pre-existing lung diseases such as asthma, those with compromised immune systems and the elderly (categorized as *sensitive populations* by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). This will reduce liability for the County and

also provide a highly marketable harvest, with organic agriculture now the fastest growing segment of the agriculture industry, even embraced by non-traditional sources such as WalMart. There are also other effective and highly-regarded sustainable farming practices that may be considered wise business choices for the farm in the future.

Additionally, sustainable farming practices will attract beneficial insects and birds to the farm, helping with pest control and pollination.

Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM)

Water use provides another opportunity for the farm as an innovative site. Because the site has access to reclaimed water, well water and County water, the site can demonstrate wise use of water options on urban farms, applying the principles of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) on small-scale agriculture. IWRM coordinates the management of water, land and related resources to balance the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the use of the resources.

Additionally, the site qualifies for Manatee Agricultural Reuse System (MARS) Farm Connection Grant Program funding to connect to the County's reclaimed water system and install some of the technological and design components necessary to develop a state-of-the-art Florida IWRM system, with user-friendly technology.

Accomplishing these Goals: Structure and Function

This narrative summarizes the recommendations for the farm, based on the goals, objectives, research, community input and expert guidance outlined in the Purpose section above.

The Geraldson Community Farm project will preserve the former Geraldson Farm property as a working farm, focusing on community involvement and the resulting community benefit of proximity to and participation in the growing of food: locally, sustainably (economically, environmentally, socially), and in an urban environment.

To whatever extent possible, the farm site and fields will be laid out in an attractive manner with a park-like feel, providing a feature compatible with its neighbors and sensitive to the nearby residential areas.

The farm will contain two major functional areas: the working farm and the Extension Service demonstration and education area. In addition to farm fields and related structures, the working farm will contain a welcome/visitor center with housing for the farm manager. There is the possibility of relocating a historic building onto the farm for this purpose, serving to bring a special ambiance to the farm and also preserving an important piece of local history.

Having the farm manager onsite and readily available to immediately address any farming issue such as inclement weather, pest infestation or an irrigation problem is critical to the success of the farm. An onsite farm manager will also be a benefit to the County and surrounding neighbors as a watchful presence on the property. The welcome/visitor center will contain a public restroom.

The community farm will welcome everyone. For example, children can learn about farming, gardening, science, cooking, group cooperation, and respect for the land. Some residents may want to serve as mentors or tour guides; or volunteer to help with the farm harvest, farm store, events or fundraising; enjoy the gardens; or give a farm-related arts

and crafts demonstration. Others may want to participate in educational activities provided by Extension, including 4H or FFA chapters.

A small parking area near the entrance will provide onsite parking for use by both the farm and Extension. Handicapped parking will be available at this location. If additional parking is needed, the Conservation Lands Management Department has offered 120 parking spaces at Robinson Preserve with a separate gate that can be operated by the farm manager at Geraldson's, remaining separate from Robinson Preserve.

A "linear park" with a focus on native and edible plantings will wind its way through the farm site, connecting the Palma Sola Botanical Park with the farm, and providing an opportunity for Palma Sola Botanical Park members to contribute their expertise to this ornamental, yet productive, feature of the farm property. Botanical park board members have expressed an initial interest in managing/gardening the area where the botanical park transitions into the farm. This is another opportunity for crossover support between the two facilities.

An Earth Box demonstration area will pay tribute to Dr. Geraldson's contributions to the development of this innovative container gardening system, and also show visitors an option for their own gardens.

The community farm will encourage community members involved in the agriculture or food system to contribute through volunteering and other activities that will take place at the farm. For example, a local chef may want to provide a cooking class, or a florist might want to do a flower-arranging workshop. Or, as an interested neighbor to the farm has suggested, the farm might present a mule day to demonstrate farming techniques of the past.

Volunteer development will be critical to the success of this type of community project.

The Geraldson Community Farm project has the potential to emerge as a model program for other communities who wish to preserve agricultural lands as productive farms and foster the sense of community that happens around a vibrant farm.

Please note that this conceptual management plan represents a long-term vision, an estimated 5-10 years, for the eventual full production mode for the farm, and that the development of a phased implementation plan is recommended. The desired goal for a small first harvest on the farm is fall of 2007, an ambitious timeline, but possible if the budget for the initial phase of implementation is authorized and able to begin soon after the conceptual management plan is approved, ideally by March 1, 2007.

PROPOSED OPERATIONS STRUCTURE

The working group recommends that the Geraldson Community Farm property be set up with two areas, managed in cooperation between the Conservation Lands Management and Agriculture and Natural Resources Department/Extension Service departments:

- 1) Working revenue-producing farm
- 2) Demonstration and education area

Working Revenue-Producing Farm

The RC&D recommends that the working revenue-producing farm be run by a non-profit entity, subject to a nonprofit agency agreement with Manatee County, where the County benefits and is not involved with day-to-day operations, for example, Manatee Glens. However, some terms of the agreement will need to be arranged differently based on factors specific to the operation of a farm if this model is adopted.

Engaging a nonprofit management entity for the implementation and operation of Geraldson Community Farm brings an organization into the management role whose sole purpose is to benefit the greater public good and fulfill its stated mission, in a non-competitive relationship with private sector businesses. Nonprofit organizations are uniquely suited to raise funds, recruit volunteers and members, and generate passionate community support. This also fulfills the BCC management goal of the farm being community operated.

The RC&D believes that a nonprofit organization can provide a valuable foundation for the future success of the farm.

Annual Operations and Management

Based on the County-approved conceptual management plan, the non-profit entity will develop a budget proposal detailing the annual costs of operating and managing the farm. Budget development for implementation is contingent on status of the site plan, along with the installation of necessary County-provided infrastructure and other capital improvements on the site, including the eventual and gradual reduction in County support.

The RC&D recommends that the nonprofit entity develop a long-range phased plan for the strategic financial independence of the farm, and that annual nonprofit agency agreements with the County reflect the goals of the long-range plan.

A budget proposal will be presented annually to the Board of County Commissioners for approval as the basis of an annual nonprofit agency agreement with the County for the operation and management of Geraldson Community Farm.

With Board approval, the RC&D may serve as the nonprofit entity during the initial years of the farm's development, with the proper structure under agreement with the County. RC&D will provide a solid foundation for the project, while transitioning to the formation of a separate nonprofit to manage and finance the farm long-term.

Partnerships

The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources/Extension Service, the Conservation Lands Management Department, the Palma Sola Botanical Park Foundation, and the farm's operating entity will seek out partnerships wherever possible and desirable, sharing expertise and volunteers. The Palma Sola Botanical Park Foundation leases the botanical park property from the County, with the Manatee County Parks and Recreation Department designated as their County liaison. The Parks and Recreation Department also manages recreational areas adjacent to the Botanical Park. Shared and/or coordinated events will be beneficial to all involved.

Capital Costs

The Conservation Lands Management Department has funds available for capital improvements determined necessary for the initial startup of the farm such as roads, structures and equipment necessary for farm operation. Construction of infrastructure improvements will be managed by the Conservation Lands Management Department. Equipment needs and costs will be submitted to the Conservation Lands Management Department for inclusion in their capital budget for this project.

Note: Acquisition of equipment necessary for basic farm operation will be a prerequisite to starting production on the farm. If all required equipment is not able to be supplied through the Conservation Lands Management Capital Improvement Budget, then alternative plans for acquiring equipment need to be put in place and planting/harvest dates adjusted accordingly.

Additional Funding Requirements

Additional funding requirements for both capital and operations expenses will be based on several factors:

- Capital expenditures not covered by Conservation Lands Management Department
- Operations expenses not covered by the County management agreement
- Additional complementary activities desired by the community

Ideally, additional funding requirements will be prioritized according to:

- 1) Urgent need to support production requirements of the farm
- 2) Expansion of community involvement in the farm
- 3) Diversification of farm business opportunities

These three priorities may overlap, and the most desirable condition will be one where all three priorities are met.

Demonstration and Education area for the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department/Extension Service

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Department/Extension Service envisions a demonstration and education area for the community that will eventually encompass the following:

- Best Management Practices
- Demonstration Gardens
- Organic/Non-organic
- Small Farms
- Flowers
- Vegetables
- Community Garden Plots
- Community Kitchen
- Master Gardeners or other volunteers to conduct tours, assist with gardens and other duties

Partnerships

The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources/Extension Service, the Conservation Lands Management Department, the Palma Sola Botanical Park Foundation, and the farm's operating entity will seek out partnerships wherever possible and desirable, sharing expertise and volunteers. The Palma Sola Botanical Park Foundation leases the botanical park property from the County, with the Manatee County Parks and Recreation Department designated as their County liaison. The Parks and Recreation Department also manages recreational areas adjacent to the Botanical Park. Shared and/or coordinated events will be beneficial to all involved.

Capital Costs

The Conservation Lands Management Department has funds available for capital improvements determined necessary for the initial startup of the farm such as roads, structures and equipment necessary for farm operation.

Additional Funding Requirements

Additional funding requirements for both capital and operations expenses will be determined by the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department/Extension Service and approved by the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners.

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Physical Improvements

Farm Fields

The Geraldson Community Farm property is primarily a flat, cleared field space with one drainage ditch running east-west through the center of the property, and another drainage ditch running north-south from the center of the northern boundary to the east-west ditch. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) checked the ditch levels and determined that the ditches had accumulated over 6 inches of silt and would need to be cleaned.

Assessment of the slope of the fields indicates that a re-grading of the fields to slope towards the natural ditches to maximize field drainage efficiency would be advisable.

Conversations with the NRCS District Conservationist and NRCS District Conservation Planners have revealed that the water table in this area is high, which may require elevation of some field beds and any areas containing citrus trees, particularly on southern portions of the property.

Conversations with the Geraldson's former farm manager have also indicated that some of the original tile drainage system on the property is still functional, although some repair may be required. Assessment of the tile drainage would be recommended; it makes sense to use existing infrastructure when practical, and because preservation would provide a demonstration of early agricultural drainage innovations to overcome some of the specific challenges to agriculture in our area.

Additionally, farming Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be demonstrated on the farm.

Development of a formal drainage plan is recommended.

Compost Area

A compost area will be developed to provide organic matter for the farm fields. [Composting operations that are done in organic and sustainable farming operations take great care to correctly balance the inputs for proper stabilization of the organic matter. The correct balance of nutrients and inputs will practically eliminate any odors from the compost area of the farm.]

Roads

An entry road will be built from 99th Street onto the farm property to allow vehicle access to the operations center and farm field area.

Other roads on the property will be vehicle compatible unpaved roads providing access to the various work and activity areas, but will be for farm personnel use only.

The "linear park" will be designed with a multi-use trail, wide and firm enough for pedestrians and small maintenance and agri-tourism vehicles (also allowing access for those with disabilities).

Parking

A small parking area located between the visitor's center and Extension demonstration area will be accessible from the 99th Street entrance to the farm property, to be equipped with handicapped parking spaces. A bike rack at the edge of the parking area is recommended. Overflow parking will be available at the nearby Robinson Preserve.

Access to the farm will be compatible with all applicable state and federal construction standards, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Portions of the linear park will be ADA compliant and the restroom facility will meet ADA standards.

Signage

Signage will be needed to identify public/staff areas of the farm, Extension demonstration area, handicap accessibility and hours of operation. The RC&D is recommending that a special logo be developed for Geraldson Community Farm to help establish a marketing look and feel for the farm for outreach and sales. Directional, informational, educational and safety signs should be located in appropriate areas around the farm.

Structures

In the Working Group discussions, there was an interest in moving a historic structure to the property. The Florida West Coast RC&D strongly recommends this as an option for structures on the site for because it will create a Florida farm ambience, preserve important Florida history and to demonstrate sustainable practices by recycling an existing dwelling. This dwelling will ideally be a two-story structure that will provide housing for the farm manager on the top floor, and space for a public restroom, conference area and farm store on the lower floor. Construction of a commercial kitchen for educational programs and cooking demonstrations has also been discussed for later addition.

Landscaping around the visitors center will be designed and installed focusing on edible plant species and incorporating Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) principles (such as native plants with drought and salt tolerance) to demonstrate yards that are functional as well as beautiful, incorporating local food production as appropriate.

A few picnic tables near the visitor's center will create a nice area for seating and for volunteer, employee and visitor lunches. A shaded picnic table would be desirable near the fields and/or post-harvest area to allow for worker breaks.

Additional structures necessary for farm production include:

- Greenhouse/shadehouse

- Equipment shed (already on farm)
- Utility/tool shed
- Refrigerated storage
- Post-harvest processing facility (needs potable water supply)

Because many of the physical improvements may be shared by several activities and organizations, “interfarm” agreements on use, care and responsibility for shared space would be advisable. This would also include establishing priorities for types of use; for example, farm production would have priority use for harvest-handling facilities and education might have priority use of a conference room area.

Irrigation System

Because of its proximity to the County’s reclaimed water line, the site qualifies for the RC&D’s Manatee Agricultural Reuse System (MARS) Farm Connection Grant Program. MARS Grant funds are available to connect to the reclaimed water line, and to provide design assistance for development of a comprehensive IWRM system on the property. The site has access to reclaimed water, well water, and county water, and some funding for water management components such as a reverse osmosis system to purify the reclaimed water and reduce salinity in the well water to make the water more suitable for use on crops.

An irrigation plan will need to be developed, preferably incorporating the existing tile drainage system and drainage ditches, and evaluating the site for IWRM applications.

Water quality samplings will be taken in conjunction with irrigation plan development.

Other Plantings

The linear park will provide a pleasant, path through the farm, connecting with the Palm Sola Botanical Park and providing partnership opportunities with Botanical Park volunteers. The linear park will be planted with both ornamentals and fruit-bearing trees. Linear park plantings along 99th street will create an attractive entrance to the farm and a pleasing natural buffer between the farm and the road. The linear park design concept may require modification during development of the final site and drainage plans.

Stormwater Pond

A stormwater pond may be designed to keep all excess water stored onsite. Need for this feature will be determined by the formal drainage plan as part of the MARS Program’s IWRM development on the site. Appropriate warning signage should be placed near the pond. Barrier landscaping may also be incorporated around the pond as a safety measure.

Extension Demonstration and Education Area

An Extension demonstration and Education Area will be designated in the northwest corner of the property, with space for gardening demonstrations and community gardens. This area will be adjacent to 99th street and the parking lot area to allow for easy access by visitors.

Master Site Plan

See Exhibit A for Conceptual Site Plan drawing.

Permits

Permits for infrastructure will be determined when the final site plan is developed.

Zoning is Agriculture (A-1) with a Coastal Hazard (CH) overlay and should support all activities defined in this plan. Any discrepancies will be flagged during final site plan development. See Exhibit J for zoning details.

Easements

The County is not aware of any easements on the property.

Natural Resource Protection

The Geraldson Community Farm represents an enormous opportunity for Manatee County, and the surrounding region to see a working farm operating with the expressed purpose of comprehensive sustainability, demonstrating a farming operation that is in harmony with ecological values and that will contribute to the environmental sustainability of the County for generations to come. A discussion of sustainable agriculture is presented in the farm plan section, later in this document.

This section addresses natural resource protection issues that will be addressed as is typical in site development.

Historically, this site in its entirety was devoted to field farming operations prior to purchase by the County. The likely natural plant communities will lie along the perimeter of the property or possibly in the natural ditch areas and will probably not be impacted by field operations. Plantings of native species being recommended for the linear park feature would add to the natural resource enhancement on the site.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will assist in inspecting the property to identify natural plant communities when they develop the NRCS Conservation Plan for the site later in the year.

The primary natural resource protection efforts will focus on onsite water management and runoff prevention, designed to demonstrate Irrigation Water Resource Management (IWRM) principles.

Soil protection is also important to the farming operation and the Extension demonstration/education site, paying particular attention to protecting fields from losing topsoil to rain or wind conditions by taking proper care to cover or plant exposed fields.

Archaeological and Historical Resource Protection

The site is historical in its very nature as a farm that was started over 50 years ago, and is a part of Manatee County's agricultural heritage. The RC&D recommends that a County historical marker be established for the farm, to honor that heritage. Partnerships with the Manatee Historical Society and the Manatee Agricultural Museum will also be developed.

The working group envisions an area in the visitor's center to tell the story of the Geraldson family and their farm, and the farm's connection to the importance of agriculture to Manatee County's history. Partnerships with the Manatee Historical Society and the Manatee Agricultural Museum could help support local history education at the farm.

Part of the living history on the site is the tile drainage system, an innovation for its time and still being used in many farming operations in our area. Some of this system is still functional, and the RC&D is recommending that some portion of the system be preserved and restored for historical demonstration purposes, if it is cost effective to do so.

The Conservation Lands Management Department will determine the necessity for an archeological assessment for the site.

Farm Education Program

Geraldson Community Farm will provide excellent opportunities for school and other tours to teach children and adults about how their food is grown and to enhance science curricula. At some point, internships for small-scale farmers will be added. With sufficient community interest, additional educational programs such as cooking, flower arranging, food preservation compost production, edible landscape design, and gardening classes may be offered, among others.

The Extension Demonstration and Education Area will show Best Management Practices (BMPs), gardening, and community garden plots. Extension has expressed an interest in providing related educational programs at the farm.

Maintenance

Manatee County:

- Maintenance of the project site prior to and during development
- Exterior maintenance of structures
- Maintenance of plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems

Additional maintenance responsibilities will be determined during implementation planning and the development of the direct charge agreement between the County and the management entity.

Staffing

Staffing recommendations for the farming operation are described below in the "Farm Operations Plan" section, under "Initial Farm Operations."

Security

The Conservation Lands Management Department will include the farm in security rotations with Robinson Preserve.

To decrease the incidence of vandalism or theft, the County will install appropriate signage, and provide a gate.

An on-site farm manager will also serve as a deterrent to security problems.

FARM OPERATIONS PLAN

In addition to the standard components of a County management plan, this conceptual plan contains a farm operations plan, which provides some of the details of the working farm area of the farm property.

The farm operations plan summarizes recommendations for initial farm operations, including requirements for startup of the farming operation including equipment, materials, planning, operations and staffing. Additionally, the farm operations plan will discuss marketing, community involvement, community outreach, events, fundraising and partnerships.

Additional programs and farm expansion are beyond the scope of this document.

Farm Operation Concepts: Sustainable Agriculture

As introduced earlier in the Project Overview, the RC&D is recommending a sustainable agriculture approach to farming at the Geraldson Community Farm.

Sustainable agriculture was addressed by Congress in the 1990 Farm Bill and defined as: "an integrated system of plant and animal production practices, that over the long term will:

- satisfy human food and fiber needs
- enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends
- make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls
- sustain the economic viability of farm operations
- enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole."

The University of California at Davis Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program defines sustainable agriculture as integrating "three main goals—environmental health, economic profitability and social/economic equity."

UC Davis goes on to say that "A systems perspective is essential to understanding sustainability. The system is envisioned in its broadest sense, from the individual farm, to the local ecosystem, and to communities affected by this farming system, both locally and globally. An emphasis on the system allows a larger and more thorough view of the consequences of farming practices on both human communities and the environment. A systems approach gives us the tools to explore the interconnections between farming and other aspects of our environment. A systems approach also implies interdisciplinary efforts in research and education. This requires not only the input of researchers from various disciplines, but also farmers, farmworkers, consumers, policymakers and others."

How does this look at the Geraldson Community Farm? Generally, this means that water, air, soil, plant life, wildlife, energy, workers, consumers, volunteers, on and off-farm -- the whole system will be considered when making management decisions on the farm.

Some examples specific to Geraldson's, and our part of Florida, are water use and water quality, which are farm issues that have a broader context. Additionally, drainage on the site impacts not only the production on the farm, but also the neighboring properties and watershed.

Another consideration will be modeling a natural environment by encouraging plant diversity on the farm, attracting a diversity of wildlife, which aids in pest and weed management. This approach also reduces the need for chemical pesticides and herbicides, creating a healthier environment for the soil, plants, wildlife, and people, both on the farm, near the farm, and beyond.

Soil management is another critical living system in sustainable agriculture. There's a whole invisible life of beneficial microbes, nutrients and insects that thrive in healthy soils. Healthy soils will produce healthier plants that are also more resistant to pests. Compost, manures, cover crops, mulches and reduced tillage are some of the methods employed to keep soils healthy. Composting also provides a sustainable use for crop waste.

Sustainable agriculture also means that quality-of-life and balance for the farmer and farm employees is as important as the environmental, community and economic aspects of managing the farm.

This is just a brief introduction to the concept of sustainable agriculture to provide an overview. Please see Exhibit N for the complete text of the UC Davis article "What is Sustainable Agriculture?"

Initial Farm Operations

The Initial Farm Operations Plan was prepared by Rick Martinez, President of Organic Integrity International, serving as technical advisor to the RC&D for the Geraldson Farm project. In addition to having worked with farmers, farmer's cooperatives and large agribusiness operations in more than 30 countries since 1979, he is the founder and Executive Director of Sweetwater Organic Community Farm, a 200 member non-profit educational CSA farm located in Tampa, Florida.

The Geraldson Community Farm farming operation will be established as an organic Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm with a phased-in process starting with 2 acres followed by incremental growth to approximately 15 acres. Based on research and discussion with local organic farmers, 15 acres was determined to be the optimal size for this type of operation, to allow for proper crop rotations, composting operations, biodiversity zones, and future livestock with rotational grazing, to establish a "best case" model of Florida sustainable farming.

This proposal is broken down into various sections addressing the different aspects of the project as follows: Farm Plan, Equipment, Irrigation, Structures, Personnel, Operational Budget and Miscellaneous.

Farm Plan

Organic has been one of the fastest growing segments of U.S. Agriculture during the last decade. Organic cropland for grains, fruits, vegetables and other crops more than doubled from 1992 to 1997, and doubled again for many crops between 1997 and 2003. (USDA Economic Research Service) The market-research firm *Nutrition Business Journal*, estimates organics sales in the US alone will reach \$15.5 billion this year. Even though the former Geraldson Farm was not farmed organically, it has been 3 years since the property has been farmed, which meets the USDA's rest period requirement for transition to organic farming. The proposal is to start with a small portion of the land, approximately two acres for vegetable production. The initial 2 acres can support up to 100 CSA memberships.

Soil Building

While the 2-acre site is under production, the remainder of the land to be used in the future for organic production should be in the meantime managed to begin the process of soil building. This would be accomplished through the use of cover crops, green manures and plow-downs. These remaining portions should be phased in as experience, growth and staff allows over the next several years.

Start-up Crops

Start up crops will include a full spectrum of vegetable crops to be supplemented with tropical and sub-tropical fruit. Fruit production will obviously take some time to become established, however crops such as papaya can be in production within one year. A full size fruit orchard [or grove] can be planned and phased in as the farm becomes fully operational. [The farm can also grow fruit trees for production within the linear park area.]

Composting

There will be a full scale composting operation utilizing the recycling of local resources with the appropriate equipment. [Composting operations that are done in organic and sustainable farming operations take great care to correctly balance the inputs for proper stabilization of the organic matter. The correct balance of nutrients and inputs will practically eliminate any odors from the compost area of the farm.]

Livestock

There has been some interest expressed in livestock. Livestock is not recommended for the initial phase so as not to distract the staff from their primary task of establishing good vegetable production. Once this has been accomplished, then the possibility of having livestock could be entertained. If the decision is to have livestock, it would be best to start with livestock that is most easy to maintain, such as laying hens.

Equipment

A full line of new equipment has been identified to reduce the need for maintenance during the startup of the operation. The recommended equipment list is as follows:

Tractor-80 hp John Deere [or equivalent] and Small Tractor-30 hp plus loader

Compost Turner
Spray Rig
Manure Spreader
Cultivator
Disc
Rotavator
Golf Cart
Utility Vehicle
Bush Hog
Pickup Truck (used)
Hydraulic Dump Trailer

Caretaker Residence

Desirable to move historic building to site

Irrigation

Formal irrigation plan to be developed.

Staffing

1st year

- 1 full-time farmer plus one seasonal laborer
- Part-time outreach/volunteer coordinator
- Executive Director (Function to be performed under contract initially by the nonprofit management entity upon approval of the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners)
- Farm consultant

2nd year

- Additional full-time person plus seasonal labor

Projected Operational Revenue/Expense Categories Year 1

Projected Revenues

CSA Memberships (projected 40+)
Organizational Membership Pilot (1)
Donations for Organizational Memberships

Projected Expense Categories

Salaries

Farmer tasks: crop planning, purchasing seeds/tree stock/plants, field preparation, planting, field maintenance, harvesting, composting, CSA management, farmer's markets, and other required farm tasks
Farmer Housing Allowance
Seasonal farm assistants: assist with all farmer tasks
Employee appreciation
Employer matching funds for FICA/worker's comp
Farm Advisor/Consultant
Management entity functions (Executive Director equivalent): farm administration, fundraising, partnership development, volunteer management, outreach, fiscal oversight

Facility Maintenance

Cleaning service for public restrooms

Financial

Bookkeeping
Accounting (tax forms)

Outreach and Marketing

Develop web site
Weekly newsletter

Equipment

Equipment Maintenance
Fuel

Supplies

Seeds
Inputs (compost)
Greenhouse supplies
Misc. farm supplies
Misc. farm office supplies
Irrigation supplies (does not include water supply)
Fuel

Miscellaneous

Pest control (buildings)

Communications

Internet provider, web hosting
Telephone

Insurance

Liability insurance
Vehicle insurance

Miscellaneous

Misc. expenses

Utilities

Electric
Water
Property maintenance such as ditch cleaning, road maintenance, building maintenance (interior)
Cost of other functions required by Manatee County

Marketing

One of the keys to success for small-scale farms is direct marketing to consumers through websites, farmer's markets, newsletters, farm events, word-of-mouth, and other publicity. Effective marketing is as important as an excellent product for economic profitability.

Farming methods and varieties of produce grown will also be market-based business decisions for the farm. Organic certification would be a good choice at startup as this would create immediate high value revenue streams with direct sales opportunities to the rapidly growing local health food stores sector in the Bradenton-Sarasota area, and is a federal requirement for food represented as "organic."

The RC&D recommends that a marketing plan be developed as part of the implementation/business plan for the farm.

Community Involvement

Community involvement is another key success factor for the Geraldson Community Farm. This includes an active and dedicated volunteer base to help with fundraising, assorted farm tasks, events planning and management, and "spreading the word," among others still to be defined by the interests of community members.

Volunteer coordination is an important role that can be filled initially by a willing volunteer, then as the volunteer program grows, a part-time employee may be necessary.

Events

Farm events are important to helping build a sense of place and sense of community. These can range from the previously mentioned "mule days," to potluck dinners, musical events, market days, or whatever else appeals to the community. Dedicated volunteers are extremely important to assist with these types of activities.

Community Outreach

Community outreach takes many forms, from marketing to providing support for diverse groups within the community. At the farm, diversity outreach is important because the farm, as a public entity, exists to serve all people in the community. Because the marketing demographic for organic produce is often high-end, the RC&D is recommending that the CSA, and potentially other programs in the future, be set up to accommodate many different income levels. This can be done in several ways, through CSA scholarships, through participation in the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Women, Infants and Children (WIC) coupon program, and through working shares.

Additionally, the RC&D is recommending that the Geraldson CSA set up a pilot program similar to one at Holcomb Farm in Connecticut, which establishes an "organizational share" as part of its CSA. Organizational shares are 10 times the size of an individual share, and are offered at a discount to non-profit

organizations providing food support for the community. The farm then raises funds to cover the balance of the cost of the organizational shares. With this program, there is an opportunity for the farm community to contribute food to others, and the receiving organization gets good food at a reduced price but is still accountable for raising some funds on their end. This is truly a win-win for everyone involved.

The RC&D has spoken with Manatee County Community Services about this program and they have expressed an interest in working with RC&D to set up a pilot with a local nonprofit.

Fundraising

For any nonprofit organization, fundraising is part of the equation. Lynne Twist, a wise fundraising mentor says that fundraising is actually a joyful act because it provides an opportunity for fundraisers to ask others to share in doing something wonderful, that they believe in. Volunteer fundraisers will be an important part of the Geraldson Community Farm community and integral to the long-term sustainability of the farm. Fundraisers will help raise funds for CSA organizational memberships, CSA scholarships, special programs, equipment needs and any other needs not covered by production, retail or event revenues.

Partnerships

Partnerships go hand-in-hand with community. The farm is already fortunate to be partnering with the Manatee County Conservation Lands Management Department, Manatee County Agriculture and Natural Resources Department /Extension Service, and the Palma Sola Botanical Park Foundation. It will be important to seek additional partnerships to broaden the reach and program offerings at the farm as part of the longer-term implementation of the farm.

Farm Plan Summary

For the first year or two of production at Geraldson Community Farm, 2 acres of farm fields with a small CSA, farmer's market presence, a website and newsletter, and one or two community events will be a manageable start to get systems running smoothly and work out the kinks. A farm manager, part-time field help, and marketing support will be critical personnel roles to implement the farming operations, along with committed community and volunteer support. Partnerships with key County departments are also invaluable resources for the farm and the community.

The desired goal for a small first harvest on the farm is fall of 2007, an ambitious timeline, but possible if the budget for the initial phase of implementation is authorized and able to begin soon after the conceptual management plan is approved.

Because of the high level of community interest in this project, the RC&D is recommending that every effort be made to work towards the 2007 first harvest goal to keep the momentum at full steam.

COST ESTIMATE AND FUNDING SOURCE

Cost Estimate

To be developed as part of formal business planning by management entity.

Funding Source

If the County authorizes a nonprofit entity to manage the Geraldson Community Farm, approved operating costs will be direct charge to Manatee County Government by the nonprofit operating entity, based on similar agreements between the County and other nonprofit management entities.

General infrastructure improvements such as roads, parking, visitor's center and approved equipment will be funded by the Conservation Lands Management Department.

Additional capital needs not covered under either an agreement with the County or under Conservation Lands Management will be prioritized and funding sources identified by the contracted management entity.

PRIORITY SCHEDULE

This timeline lists only major milestones in the farm's implementation to be able to attain first harvest by fall of 2007. A detailed implementation timeline will need to be developed in conjunction with the County's plans for site development.

MILESTONE	OPTIMUM DATE
Approval of Conceptual Plan by BCC	TBD
Purchase Equipment and Implements Search for and Hire Farm Manager Complete Promotional Materials Install Irrigation for 3 acres (cost-saving prep for year 2)	3/1/2007
Make Compost	4/1/2007
Install Electrical Service	4/15/2007
Plant Cover Crops Construct Greenhouse/Shadehouse	5/15/2007
Order Greenhouse Supplies Order Seeds Order Hand Implements and Tools Search for and Hire Farm Helper	7/1/2007
Complete Storage Facility/Sheds Start Seeds in Greenhouse	8/1/2007
First Field Prep	8/15/2007
Begin Field Planting Complete Post-Harvest Facility	9/1/2007
Begin Weekly Harvest	9/24/2007

MONITORING

Monitoring of the project will occur in the following ways:

- Constant feedback from community members participating in the farm in the form of surveys and program evaluations
- Financial reports that measure progress towards and assessment of financial goals
- Farm reporting to management entity on success/challenges/needs of farm operations
- Reporting by the management entity on success of the farm's community programs
- Reporting by the management entity on the progress of the farm's master plan

EXHIBITS

- A. Proposed Conceptual Site Plan
- B. Materials from the Community Meetings
- C. Letters of Support
- D. CSA Interest Sign-up Sheets
- E. Press articles featuring Geraldson Community Farm
- F. Working Group Meeting Minutes
- G. Survey Map
- H. Aerial Photograph of Site
- I. Photographs of Geraldson Community Farm Site
- J. Zoning Chart
- K. RC&D Presentation on Community Farms Research
- L. Community Farm Models
- M. University of Florida Extension paper: "What is Community Supported Agriculture?"
- N. University of California at Davis paper: "What is Sustainable Agriculture?"