In 1990, Dade County voters approved a two-year property tax increase to acquire, protect, and manage environmentally endangered lands for this and future generations. The EEL Program was established by Metro Dade County to carry out the voters' mandate.

A total of some $100 million for the EEL Fund was raised by this voter approved tax. To date the EEL Program has acquired over $46 million dollars worth of property and has spent just $35 million.

Thanks to the foresight of Dade County's voters, the public now owns 2,800 more acres of rockridge pineland, tropical hardwood hammock, salt marsh, mangrove and riverfront.

Dade County set aside $10 million (of the $100 million) in a perpetual trust fund to pay for site management. Each year, the interest from this $10 million will be used to secure, restore, and care for the sites acquired.

Annually, the EEL program considers sites that are proposed for acquisition by the general public. Proposals by government agencies are considered semiannually.

In selecting lands, each proposed site is inspected by County staff and the citizen volunteers who are members of the Land Acquisition Selection Committee. In selecting lands, the biological health, vulnerability, and manageability of each proposed site is evaluated. Following a public hearing, the LASC recommends sites for purchase to the Board of County Commissioners.

Once approved for the Acquisition list, sites are appraised and a purchase is negotiated with the seller. The EEL Program works only with willing sellers to purchase land.

To stretch the funds available, EEL seeks matching funds and acquisition partners. EEL acquisitions are eligible for about $40 million in matching grants, joint acquisition agreements, and donations.

The State's Preservation 2000 bond program has been an important source of matching funds. EEL acquisition partners that are supported by Preservation 2000 include the Conservation and Recreation Lands Program, the Save Our Rivers Program, and the Florida Communities Trust.

The value of all properties currently on the EEL Acquisition List is estimated to be approximately $122 million.