

Little Saint James Island

Greater Saint James Island

Project No: LSJ-717 - Site Visit July 12-16, 2017

Observations and Recommendations

Introduction

I would like to thank the Owner and Management staff for the opportunity to consult on your project. There are many facets to this operation that have been observed, and many yet to be reviewed. The commentary offered in this report will be twofold. First, an overview of the operation, facilities, and staffing. Second, review of specific areas in current phase of development with observations and recommendations for your consideration. The opening remarks will be general in scope to provide a basis for the ensuing observations, critiques, and recommendations.

Observations

Operations

LSJ has been in development for some time now and most of the existing sites appear to be very near completion stage. An extensive punch list remains and many ongoing improvements as well as future plans were observed and discussed. The success of the operation is dependent on adequate facilities and resources to support the owner's vision. Due to the remote nature of this site there are unique challenges to assemble the necessary components which have been adequately addressed and assurance that resources are not an issue to meet future needs.

Facilities

Proper facilities are necessary to ensure the success of any project. The physical plant, maintenance and construction facilities and available resources are impressive and well planned. A tour of all the maintenance and support sites was accomplished and comments and examples will be provided further on in this report.

Staffing

This is what drives the engine. A professional and motivated staff will utilize the previous two elements and make or break your project. I have known and worked with Mike and Kim Ross for many years and know them to be a hard working, dedicated team. Two days is obviously not long enough for an honest evaluation of any other staff but labor seems adequate. Met most of the key staff members, albeit briefly, and there is a need for additional intermediate management support to provide organization and attention to detail that is currently lacking. This will allow the Managers and supervisors the ability to efficiently coordinate their day to day activities.

Recommendations

Operations

Communication is vital to your operation to achieve its goals in a timely and efficient manner. New management always faces the challenge of gaining the trust and support of the staff. This is in process here currently and will certainly improve over time as Mr. Ross defines the duties and priorities of the incumbent staff. A reporting chain of command has to be established to provide a conduit for all information to channel upwards so all are on the same page and delegation of duties can be tracked.

Facilities

As stated, the facilities are impressive and adequate. There is a need for organization and housekeeping of the storage facilities to achieve the desired outcome in the field. I firmly believe that if the staff facilities and equipment are not in order, it will show up in the results in the field. The old saying 'A place for everything, and everything in its place' enables each staff member to perform their duties at the highest level.

Physical Plant - The physical plant interior, in particular the generator plant, fuel storage, and the RO plant were clean and well maintained and would like to see the same attention to throughout the entire facility.

Storage Areas - The tool and supply storage areas were good at best with a few instances of haphazard placement of supplies. A procedure should be in place for proper receiving and storage of materials, and a better defined storage area protocol in the various work bays.

Nursery Area – Currently not utilized and shade house area somewhat neglected. There is ample area for the growing and staging of plant material for the island. Useful in a variety of ways including procurement of container stock and immature plant material for future needs, replacement stock for poor specimens in the field, shade house for sensitive plant material, possible use as turf nursery. The investment here is small if we grow our own and is a perfect opportunity to introduce new species at low risk.

Irrigation – Where do I start? No plans or maps of existing layouts. Found some controllers in the field but stations not labeled. A wide variety of irrigation heads of which some are suitable and some not in various locations. Found some instances of tilted heads, heads not at grade, and valves closed, wiring above ground, and valve boxes broken or not installed. The daunting task of mapping the system should be done ASAP including audit of head style, adjustment, and placement. Water availability and quality is your biggest challenge in achieving your landscape goals! Investigation of additional water sources is recommended (RO, wells?).

Landscaping/Ornamental Plantings – I will limit my comments to a few specific areas for thoughts and recommendations, the Basket and Waterfall on LSJ, and the house/pool area on GSJ. On LSJ, the wall on the Basket is nearly complete and is impressive to view on entering from the dock. The planting on top can be finished to augment the first impression. A formal layered or tiered planting would blend in well

with the surrounds on the road and provide elevation and depth to the already impressive façade. I would leave the existing taller palms and remove the existing smaller palms for replanting elsewhere. In place of the small palms, there would be an intermediate row of flowering shrubs transitioning to a forward row of smaller plant material terminating at the top of the wall. I would not recommend covering or cascading over the wall as it is the strong frame to this planting. At the waterfall, the jasmine and palms blend well with the area. Currently, there are three palms ascending the left and only one on the right. Two additional palms need to be installed on the right to achieve the proper framing and symmetry for this area. At the top of the falls, I would recommend the same treatment as the basket to achieve elevation. The massed jasmine has filled in greatly and would consider removing about three feet adjacent to the rock and installing a staggered row of flowers/groundcover in a complementary color to frame the falls. There are turf areas adjacent to the falls and at the Info Center across the road that require attention for weed control and fertility that would greatly enhance these areas and is simple and economical to apply.

Over on GSJ, the house and pool area is a work in progress. The area adjacent to and behind the pool entrance begs to have coverage to prevent dirt and debris from being tracked into the pool area. A small turf area (20x20) at the end of the path would provide erosion control and stability to this area that washed out in recent rains. This would also prevent the tracking of dirt and debris to the pool and deck. The area directly up the hill from the pool has some turf established that only requires additional care. I would also plant 3-4 foot shrubs or ornamental grasses along the base of the rock wall to filter runoff and debris from further up the slope. Down the steps to the house a turf cover would provide the same stability and buffer to prevent tracking of dirt and debris to the decks and housing units. Down on the beach, there is some turf installation in progress on the beach among the palms. Irrigation was recently installed and hydro seeding will be applied shortly.

The unique culture and climate of the island provides a wonderful challenge. In most instances, I would recommend scouting the island for native species to use as the anchor of many of the larger proposed landscape areas. These are by and large monochromatic in nature and acclimated to the predominantly rock and sand growing environment. The additional color and scents of the border plantings would benefit from soil enhancement to ensure this material will thrive and survive. A program of plant health amendments would be prescribed as well.

The next step to these landscaping recommendations will be to provide photographic examples and drawings that I am better able to produce from my home office. I will begin preparation on my return home and will forward within the next two weeks.

A final note on turf areas...as these varieties mature they will require periodic cultivation to provide optimum results. Core aeration and verticutting equipment will be needed. These are typically self contained, walk behind units. The lawn at the main residence entryway is particularly thick and spongy and would benefit from this treatment. The other turf at the back of the house and pool require weed and fertility treatments similar to prescribed earlier.

Equipment

Equipment acquisition doesn't appear to be a problem here. There is also a fairly good stable of equipment and supplies for maintenance practices at this time. As the transition from construction to maintenance moves forward and access roads are stabilized, you should consider some lighter duty maintenance trucks for the gardening and landscape staff. John Deere ProGator vehicles are a good value for carting mowers, trimmers and spreaders for the small turf plots and flower beds. I will produce a more detailed list of specific equipment requirements in my next report.

Roads and Paths

The coarse nature of the material on the island lends itself to erosion and migration during rainy periods. The nature of the mud is a particular nuisance due to tracking onto decks and into the buildings. Some of the earlier recommendations for turf are an effort to minimize that housekeeping. The final surface of the roads and paths will usually be one of three materials: asphalt, concrete, or pavers. Of the three, concrete would be my choice primarily on sloped areas as pavers and asphalt tend to be easily undermined over time. Paving doesn't have to be employed in all areas. Flatter portions of the roads and paths can be adequately stabilized with stone that only requires periodic grading and an erosion blanket can be installed underneath if desired.

Staffing

It would be premature of me to report on individual staff after only a few days on site. I met them on arrival at the island and have had the opportunity to witness some of the daily activities. This area will address what I deem necessary primarily from a grounds maintenance point of view. A landscape professional to plan, facilitate, and document the short and long term goals of the department, a qualified assistant to be the field person to account for the staff and their activities, an irrigation foreman and staff to install, troubleshoot, and maintain the watering system in addition to monitoring daily watering schedules. A 'plant professional' to inspect all landscape beds, flower gardens, and the nursery to monitor plant health. A support staff of laborers to perform daily mowing, trimming, etc. while assisting the aforementioned managers as required. What the optimum number of staff will be I can't say with certainty at this time. You must build from those top four down and you won't be disappointed.

Summary

This very brief visit has been very informative and productive. I have a better handle on the opportunities and challenges that accompany this project. I will be in contact in the very near future and my thoughts and observations will continue to evolve as I review the information further. Thanks again for your interest and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

James D. Cross

