

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Collier and Lee Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1991
<i>Project Acres</i>	70,694
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	40,036
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$94,659,111
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	30,658
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$1,221,493,316

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed project will create conservation connections between the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Preserve and the National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. The project will provide critical habitat protection for rare and imperiled wildlife such as the Florida panther, black bear, wood stork, snowy egret and bald eagle. The project will also protect the flow of water feeding the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand and other nearby areas.

General Description

The Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed project, located in Collier and Lee counties, consists of quality cypress swamps and marshes along with some upland areas that are vulnerable to agricultural and residential development. The project will connect Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve and the National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary to secure important habitat for the Florida panther and Florida black bear. The large expanses of wetlands within the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed are believed to be important to the survival of many rare and critically imperiled species, including at least two species of rare and endangered orchids and an unusual stand of dwarf bald cypress.



FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida panther	G5T1/S1
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
<i>Fakahatchee ladies'-tresses</i>	G4T1/S1
<i>clamshell orchid</i>	G4G5T2/S2
<i>narrow-leaved carolina scalystem</i>	G4T2/S2
Wood stork	G4/S2
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Snowy egret	G5/S3
Yellow-crowned night-heron	G5/S3
Little blue heron	G5/S4

Public Use

The project is designated as a wildlife and environmental area with such uses as hiking, camping and environmental education.

Acquisition Planning

1990

On December 7, 1990, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed project to the Conservation and Recreational Lands Priority List. The project, sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District, consists of 18,205 acres, 73 landowners and a taxable value of \$23,704,330. The entire project is in Lee and Collier counties and contains approximately 49,810 acres. However, the initial focus of land acquisition is on the Camp Keis Strand Corridor (18,205 acres).

If fee-simple acquisition is not negotiable, conservation easements or other less-than-fee acquisition techniques will be pursued.

1992

On November 20, 1992, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council amended the project design to allow matching funds anywhere within the project for “new” acquisitions acquired after November 20, 1992 by Lee County and the South Florida Water Management District.

1993

On September 20, 1993, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved a 3,182-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District, consisted of four tracts and multiple landowners, and a taxable value of \$8,636,331.

1995

On October 30, 1995, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved a 612-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District and had a taxable value of \$891,403.





1996

On December 5, 1996, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved a 3,040-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District, consisted of two sites and a taxable value of \$9,029,712.

1999

On December 9, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a 2,560-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District and the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Trust, consisted of 353 parcels, 260 landowners and had a taxable value of \$10,500,000. The parcels were designated as essential.

2002

On June 6, 2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a 424-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District, consisted of 147 parcels and multiple landowners, and a taxable value of \$2,570,240.

2007

On December 17, 2007, Collier County acquired the 367.7-acre Caracara Prairie Preserve, of which approximately 40 acres are in the project boundary.

2009

On February 6, 2009, Collier County bought 2,499 acres, known as Pepper Ranch, for \$32,525,080 through the Conservation Collier Program.

In October 2009, Lee County acquired 15 acres for \$136,500 for their 20/20 program. The South Florida Water Management District donated 10 acres to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in the same month.

In 2009, the South Florida Water Management District acquired 58 GIS acres for \$661,250). Additionally, three easement tracts (15 acres) were donated by Bonita Springs Utility Co.

2010

In November 2010, the South Florida Water Management District acquired 191 acres for \$3,828,890.

In December 2010, the South Florida Water Management District acquired 5 acres for \$75,000.

2011

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added the project to the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

2012

On August 17, 2012, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the removal of 468 developed or non-contiguous parcels totaling 1,541.2 acres from the project boundary.

2013

On February 15, 2013, the Acquisition and Restoration Council removed 77 acres from the project boundary because development has already disturbed the property.





2015

In 2015, township-range-sections 47S27E6 (632.96 acres) and 47S27E7 (627.75 acres) were added to Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Approximately 478 acres of section six and all of section seven are in the project boundary.

2016

On October 21, 2016, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed Headwaters proposal to the existing Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed project as an amendment. This 2,841-acre addition in the southeastern corner of Lee County will utilize willing sellers of groves to make hydrologic improvements to drainage areas that affected downstream areas. The addition's goals include conserving fresh water that has run off into other areas, restoring water levels of the Corkscrew Swamp, improving habitat for such species as the Florida panther and the wood stork, and creating public recreation opportunities. The Florida Department of Transportation is coordinating with South Florida Water Management District staff to possibly use the area as mitigation for the widening of State Road 82.

2017

On December 4, 2017, Lee County acquired Larry Kiker Preserve (4,000 acres) via the Lee County Conservation 20/20 program, of which 2,690 acres are within the project boundary.

Coordination

Acquisition partners are the South Florida Water Management District, Lee County and Collier County. Both The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land have been intermediaries in the acquisition of some tracts. Resolutions in support of the project include a pledge from Lee County for \$1.5 million.

Management Policy Statement

The primary management goals of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed are to conserve and protect significant habitat for native and imperiled species; and conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems to enhance or protect significant natural resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect.

Manager(s)

The South Florida Water Management District is the recommended manager.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The project's size, natural communities and extremely sensitive wildlife resources qualify it as a wildlife management area.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

There are various intensities of management required for lands in the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed. There are low-need parcels such as virgin stands of cypress that require little or no management. There are also moderate-need tracts that need basic resource management such as prescribed burning, and high-need tracts that have been completely altered. Severely altered tracts, such as agricultural fields, must be ecologically restored.





Management Implementation, Public Access, Site Security and Protection of Infrastructure

The initial land management plan was implemented in February 1991. Planning and operational activities are ongoing. Public use guidelines, including public access, have been established and are constantly being revised.

Revenue-generating Potential

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission activities (such as hunting) may generate revenue through permit and license fees. No other revenue-producing practices are envisioned at this stage of the management program.

Cooperators in Management Activities

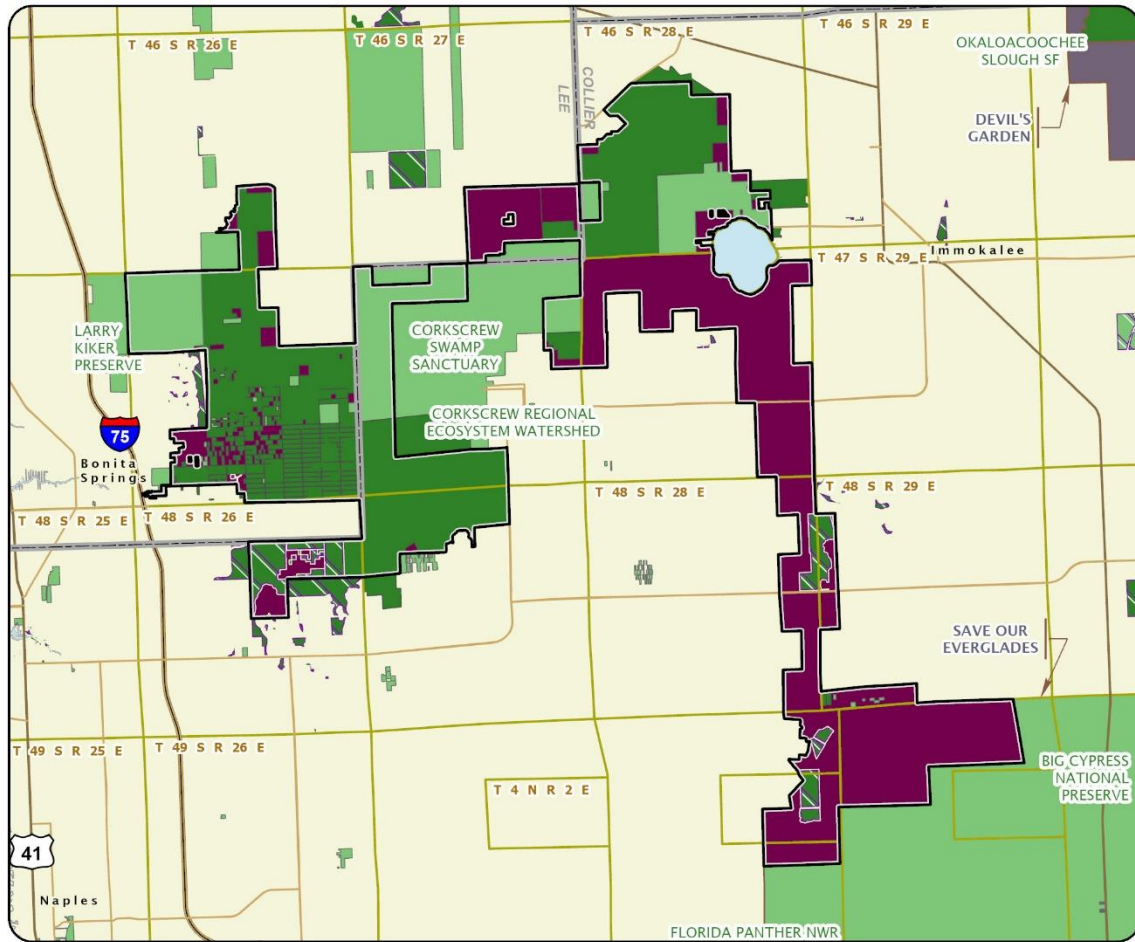
A cooperative management agreement with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission was executed on September 6, 1994. The project now receives regular inspections by the South Florida Water Management District and law enforcement patrol by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Under the agreement, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will enforce all laws, rules and regulations applicable to the management of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed. Additional lands acquired will be given the same protection.

Management Cost Summary

<u>SFWMD</u>	<u>1996/97</u>	<u>1997/98</u>
Source of Funds	WMLTF	
Salary	\$107,238	\$117,961
OPS	\$35,000	\$38,500
Expense	\$197,250	\$216,915
OCO	\$0	\$28,000
FCO	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$339,448	\$401,376

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





CORKSCREW REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM WATERSHED

COLLIER AND LEE COUNTIES

