

Wilson Ranch

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Polk County

| | |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Year Added to Priority List</i> | 2021 |
| <i>Project Acres</i> | 451 |
| <i>Acquired Acres</i> | 0 |
| <i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i> | \$0 |
| <i>Remaining Project Acres</i> | 451 |
| <i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i> | \$1,109,808 |

Purpose for State Acquisition

The goal of the Wilson Ranch project is to protect and restore the Peace River headwaters, valuable wildlife habitat, regionally significant wetlands, water resources and natural floodplain function along the Upper Peace River. The project represents an important link in a critical conservation corridor of existing public land and private conservation easements and will expand opportunities for resource-based public outdoor recreation within the Peace River Basin.

General Description

Wilson Ranch is in Polk County and is currently utilized as an active cattle ranch, characterized by pasture, upland forest, bottomland forest and swamp. Wilson Ranch is located within the Peace River Basin and contains the confluence of Peace Creek and Saddle Creek (the headwaters of the Peace River). The project lies along the Atlantic Flyway and provides habitat for state and federally listed species. Over half of the site also lies within a designated Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for species such as the Florida snail kite, Cooper's hawk and American swallow-tailed kite. Despite past hydrological alterations at Wilson Ranch, many of the species found on-site are associated with natural wetland communities. Three archaeological sites and two Linear Resource Groups have also been documented within the project area.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

| <u>FNAI Elements</u> | <u>Score</u> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Roseate spoonbill | G5/S2 |
| Glossy ibis | G5/S3 |
| Little blue heron | G5/S4 |
| White ibis | G5/S4 |

Public Use

The Wilson Ranch project is proposed for fee-simple acquisition and may be utilized for public outdoor recreation if acquired. A primary objective is to protect the resources on-site while providing access and compatible passive recreation opportunities. Potential activities include hiking, bicycling, fishing and environmental education. Recreation activities will be evaluated to limit impacts to natural resources and



alteration of natural habitats. Observation areas may include educational signage describing the importance of the site, mainly its ecological value to the Peace River, Saddle Creek and the Peace River Basin.

Acquisition Planning

2021

On April 9, 2021, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added the Wilson Ranch project to the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

Management Policy Statement

Management will focus on the preservation and restoration of the resources onsite with an emphasis on the water resources. Where compatible with the site's resources, passive resource-based recreation will be provided to the public. The following management goals and objectives were identified: preserve, maintain, enhance and restore natural communities and wildlife habitat; protect and sustain populations of threatened and endangered species; allow restoration of wetland systems; provide connectivity to adjacent conservation lands; provide appropriate nature-based recreation that offers public enjoyment of the site without damaging the unique natural habitats; and periodically review, evaluate and modify the management of the Wilson Ranch property.

Manager(s)

The recommended manager is the Polk County Environmental Lands Program.

Management Prospectus

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

The conditions which will affect the intensity of management will be directly related to the goals for the site. A full assessment will need to be conducted to determine the condition of the natural resources described above and the extent of restoration feasible at the site. Implementation of compatible recreation will also affect the intensity of management. This will be included in the site assessment and incorporated into the 10-year management plan.

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

Once acquisition is completed, a site assessment will be conducted, and the management plan will be drafted. As the plan is created, securing the site and low impact accessibility improvements will begin. Any extensive improvements for restoration or allowing public access will not be initiated until the final management plan is accepted by the state.

Revenue-generating Potential

The Polk County Environmental Lands Program currently manages 13 natural areas that protect and restore water, wildlife and wilderness while allowing passive outdoor recreation. There are no plans to generate revenue from the site. If plans to generate revenue come to light, they will be addressed in the management plan.





Cooperators in management activities

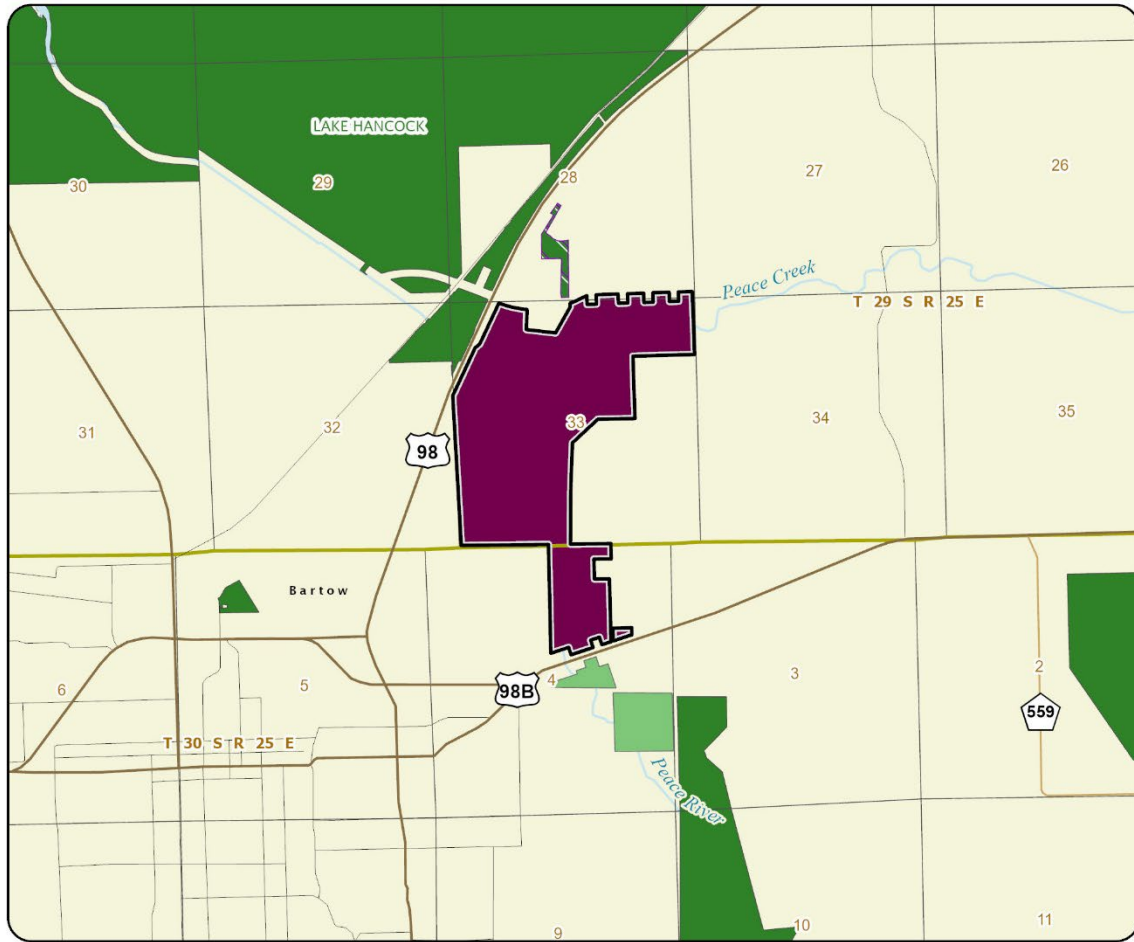
Polk County will manage the subject property and implement the management plan. Other agencies that may cooperatively assist include the Florida Forest Service, DEP, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Management Cost Summary

| <u>PCELP</u> | <u>Cost</u> |
|---|-----------------|
| Site Security (fencing/gate repair, boundary signs) | \$30,000 |
| Invasive Plant Management | \$15,000 |
| Final Management Plan | \$10,000 |
| TOTAL | \$55,000 |

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





WILSON RANCH

POLK COUNTY

-  Florida Forever Project Boundary
-  Essential Parcels Remaining
-  State Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Less-Than-Fee Acquisition

