

Deer Creek Ranch

Less-Than-Fee

DeSoto County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>2023</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>5,934</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>5,723</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>211</i>
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$1,310,773</i>

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Deer Creek Ranch project features two sloughs that, if acquired, will be protected, and ensure the water quality of the Peace River watershed. The project's proximity to a variety of conservation lands expands the protection of imperiled species habitat, provides connectivity of conservation lands, ensures the quality and quantity of surface water and protects an important wildlife corridor.

General Description

The Deer Creek Ranch project contains 19 parcels totaling 5,934 acres in DeSoto County. The project borders Halls Tiger Bay Ranch Agricultural and Conservation Easement on its western side, Bob Paul Conservation Easement on its eastern side and Bright Hour Watershed on its northern side. The property lies entirely within the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

Deer Creek Ranch is within the Peace River watershed. Tiger Bay Slough runs through the center of the property and Myrtle Slough flows through the western portion of the property. These tributaries help to provide drinking water for the City of Punta Gorda before eventually meeting the Peace River and flowing into eastern Charlotte Harbor. Acquisition of Deer Creek Ranch will help to protect the surface and drinking water quality of the Peace River watershed.

The property hosts a wide variety of imperiled species such as Florida scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), Florida burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), and sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*), among others. The landowner has also reported seeing crested caracara (*Caracara plancus*), Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*), Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) and southern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*) on the property. According to the Florida Forever Measures Evaluation, Deer Creek Ranch significantly contributes to Florida Natural Areas Inventory Habitat Conservation Priorities (100%) and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (99%).

Deer Creek Ranch is a working cattle ranch, and as such, much of the property (70%) is made up of improved and semi-improved pasture. There are 11 residences or pole barns on the property. The predominant natural communities in the eastern portion of Deer Creek Ranch include large contiguous areas of scrubby flatwoods, dry prairie and wet prairie. The western half of the property is primarily improved pasture with mesic flatwoods, scrubby flatwoods and wet flatwoods around the perimeter.



These natural communities are in good to excellent condition and the landowner excludes cattle from these natural areas.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Florida scrub-jay	G1G2/S1S2
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida sandhill crane	G5T2/S2
Florida burrowing owl	G4T3/S3
Roseate spoonbill	G5/S2
Glossy ibis	G5/S3
Little blue heron	G5/S4
Tricolored heron	G5/S4
White ibis	G5/S4

Public Use

Deer Creek Ranch is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. Due to the lack of public access, there will not be any public resource-based outdoor recreation potential for the project.

Acquisition Planning

2023

On October 13, 2023, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) voted to add Deer Creek Ranch to the Less- Than-Fee category of the 2024 Florida Forever Priority List. The project includes 5,934 acres and a just value of \$27,355,426.

2024

On December 3, 2024, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) acquired a 5,698.91-acre conservation easement in DeSoto County from Deer Creek Ranch, LLC and Deer Creek Family Ranch, LLC.

Coordination

There are no identified partners on the project.

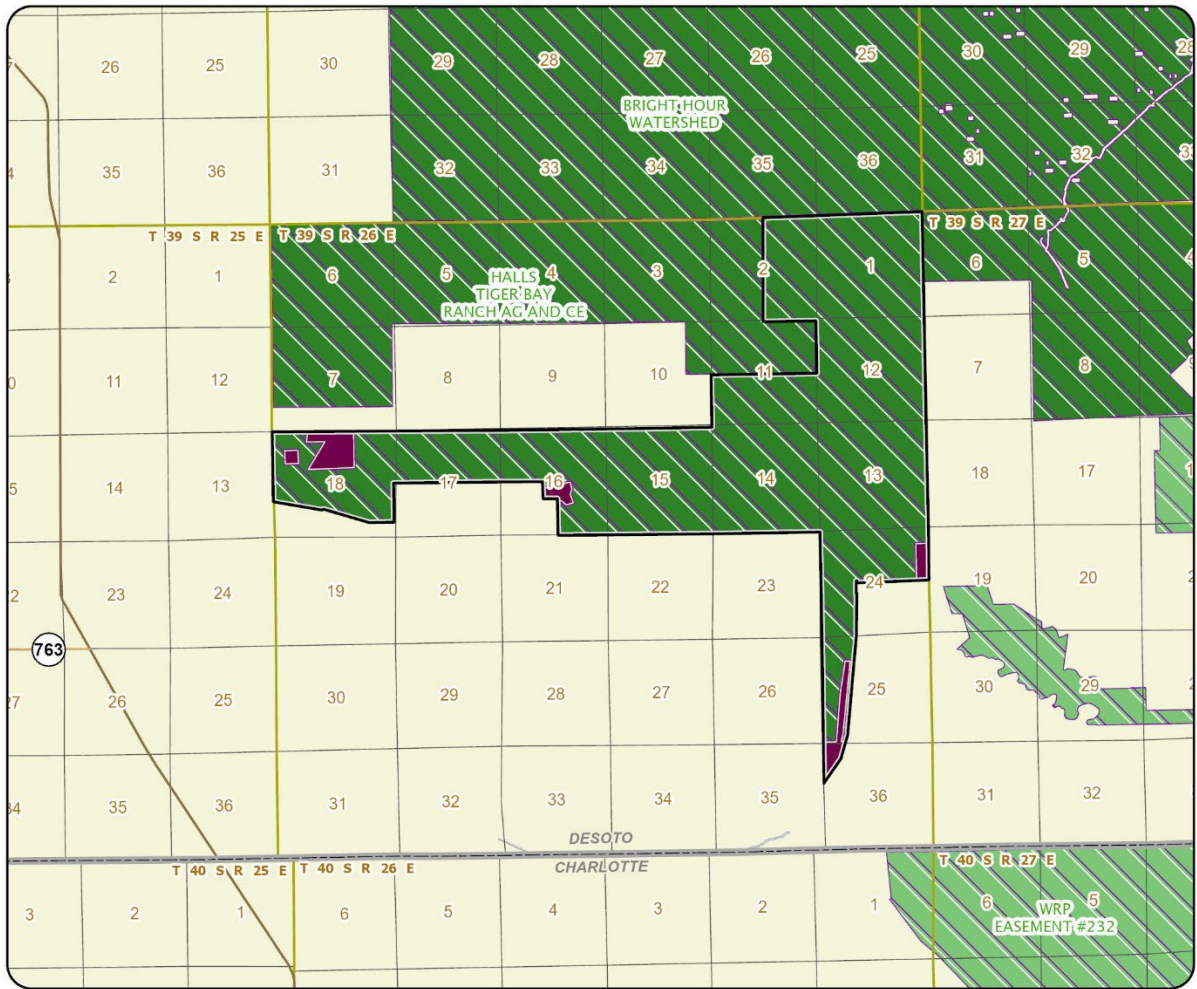
Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, Deer Creek Ranch would be managed for conservation purposes by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm continued compliance with the conditions of the conservation easement would be coordinated by DEP's Division of State Lands.

Management Prospectus

DEP's Division of State Lands will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner.





DEER CREEK RANCH

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