

# Dickerson Bay/Bald Point

Substantially Complete

Franklin and Wakulla Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1996
<i>Project Acres</i>	24,390
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	21,819
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	2,570
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$20,909,532

## Purpose for State Acquisition

On the coast of Wakulla and Franklin counties, the shallow Gulf of America laps against the westernmost Big Bend salt marshes and the easternmost white sand beaches of the Panhandle. The St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge already protects much of this coast; the Dickerson Bay/Bald Point project will protect more, including areas critical to the survival of the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*). In so doing, it will also protect the fishery in the area by protecting its foundation - rich mud flats and seagrass beds - and will add land to Mashes Sands County Park where people may enjoy the beauty of this little-disturbed coast.

## General Description

The project is comprised of three separate areas, including uplands around Dickerson, Levy and Ochlockonee Bays. These bays provide foraging habitat for juvenile Kemp's ridley sea turtles, the world's most endangered marine turtle, and other state or globally rare birds and turtles such as wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*). The uplands surrounding the three bays are an intricate mosaic of lakes, depression marshes and mesic flatwoods (high quality to disturbed) that support populations of rare animals including southern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*) and gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). Scrubby flatwoods and scrub relate to the marine communities by numerous tidal creeks, salt flats and salt marshes. The Bald Point site includes beach dunes that support and maintain the quality of marine communities and are used by many species of shore birds. Natural upland communities adjoin similar communities in St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to the north and west. Twelve archaeological sites are known from Bald Point. The Bald Point site is threatened by development.

**FNAI Element Occurrence Summary**

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Kemp's ridley sea turtle	G1/S1
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Loggerhead sea turtle	G2G4/S3
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Lobeless spiny burrowing beetle	G1/S1
<i>Godfrey's blazing star</i>	G1G2/S1S2
<i>fever tree</i>	G4/S2
<i>Florida milkvetch</i>	G3G4/S2S3
<i>Gulf Coast lupine</i>	G3T3/S3
Merlin	G5/S2
Least tern	G4/S3

**Public Use**

The southern part of this project (i.e., Bald Point and southern Dickerson Bay) is designated for use as a state park that will augment the recreational opportunities of the adjacent Mashles Sands County Park with areas for picnicking, hiking, camping and canoeing. The beaches of Bald Point are suitable for swimming and other activities. The northern part of this project will be incorporated into the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The Florida Forest Service (FFS) and the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) will provide recreational opportunities within a 17,041-acre addition made to the project in 2016. Access to Ochlockonee Bay, Alligator Harbor Aquatic Preserve and several of the ponds provide opportunities for paddling and fishing. The extensive network of wooded roads can easily accommodate hiking, biking and nature studies. The extensive highway frontage expands the possibilities for siting of a campground and visitor center.

**Acquisition Planning****1996**

The essential parcels are McMillan, Brunstad, Nichols, JDN Enterprises, Meara, Cobleigh, Panacea Coastal Properties and Metcalf. Piney Island, also an essential parcel, was donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 1996. All Bald Point parcels are essential. The LGR Investment Fund, LTD. parcel has been acquired.

**1998**

On October 15, 1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council designated the Jer Be Lou Development Co. parcel as essential. The parcel has been acquired. Initial acquisition started in 1999 with funds from the Conservation and Recreational Lands/Preservation 2000 acquisition program along Apalachee Bay.

**1999**

On August 30, 1999, the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (BOT) purchased 1,349 acres in Franklin County from The Trust for Public Land which later became Bald Point State Park.





On December 9, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council removed 3,840 acres owned by The St. Joe Company and placed them in the St. Joe Timberland Florida Forever project.

### **2003**

In 2003, Bald Point State Park was expanded when 3,485 acres were purchased from the St. Joe Company.

### **2006**

As of January 2006, Bald Point State Park contained 4,859 acres and is jointly administered with Ochlockonee River State Park.

### **2011**

On September 6, 2011, DRP purchased to manage 0.77 acres (Kennedy-\$67,500).

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) placed this project in the Climate Change Lands category.

### **2016**

In October 2016, ARC approved the Bluffs of St. Teresa project and immediately amended that project into the Dickerson Bay/Bald Point project. This added 17,041 acres adjacent to Bald Point State Park, across the Ochlockonee River from Ochlockonee River State Park and adjacent to Tate's Hell State Forest. If acquired, this land would be managed by the Florida Forest Service (FFS) as part of Tate's Hell State Forest and by DRP as part of Bald Point State Park.

### **2020**

On October 1, 2020, the Bluffs of St. Teresa tract was acquired in fee from Ochlocknee Timberlands, LLC. The acquisition contains 16,971.6 acres and was purchased for \$43,000,000 with \$38,562,000 in Florida Forever funds and \$4,438,000 in federal funding. This was the largest Florida Forever acquisition in over a decade. The property, located in Franklin County and part of Wakulla County, will be managed in part by FFS as part of Tate's Hell State Forest, and DRP as part of Bald Point State Park and Ochlocknee River State Park.

The Dickerson Bay/Bald Point Florida Forever project is now more than 85 percent complete. It was moved into the Substantially Complete category by ARC in December 2020.

### **2021**

DEP acquired fee simple 0.15 acres from the Price Family that will be managed as an addition to Bald Point State Park.

### **2023**

In October 2023, ARC voted to remove approximately 1,796 acres from the project that were deemed unsuitable for State acquisition.





## Coordination

USFWS is an acquisition partner and coordination between the state and federal governments should be maintained. On August 27, 1998, a portion of the Bald Point project was selected to receive Florida Communities Trust grant funding.

## Management Policy Statement

The primary objectives of management of the Dickerson Bay/Bald Point project are to maintain and restore the natural communities around Dickerson and Levy bays and to give the public an area for hiking, fishing, camping and other recreation compatible with the protection of the natural resources. Protecting the natural communities of the area is critical to the survival of the endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle and will also help protect habitat for wading birds and shore birds. It will also help protect a recreational and commercial fishery that depends on the marine life of the bays. The project should be managed under the single-use concept: management activities should be directed toward the preservation of the salt marshes, flatwoods and other communities around the bays. Consumptive uses such as hunting or logging should not be permitted. Managers should control public access to the project; limit public motor vehicles to one or a few main roads; thoroughly inventory the resources; burn the fire-dependent flatwoods in a pattern mimicking natural lightning-season fires, using natural firebreaks or existing roads for control; and monitor management activities to ensure that they are actually maintaining or improving the quality of the natural communities. Managers should limit the number and size of recreational facilities, such as hiking trails, ensure that they avoid the most sensitive resources, and site them in already disturbed areas when possible.

The project includes nearly all of the undeveloped, privately-owned land along Dickerson and Levy Bays and adjoins the Mashles Sands County Park on its southeast border. It, therefore, has the configuration and location to achieve its primary objectives.

## Manager(s)

DRP will manage that portion of the project in Franklin County; USFWS and Wakulla County will separately manage individual parcels in Wakulla County.

## Management Prospectus

### **Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

The property will be a high-need management area. Public recreational use and development compatible with resource management will be an integral aspect of management.

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

Upon acquisition and assignment to DRP, public access will be provided for low-intensity, non- facility related outdoor recreation activities. Also, management will concentrate on site security, fire management and developing a resource inventory and public use plan. Vehicle access by the public will be confined to designated points and routes. Protecting the adjacent marine environment will be a primary focus for the property. Over the long term, however, a wide range of resource-based recreation and environmental education facilities may be promoted. The nature, extent and location of





the infrastructure will be defined by the management plan for the property. Restoring and maintaining natural communities will be incorporated into long-range management efforts and disturbed areas will be restored to conditions that would be expected to occur in natural systems, to the extent practical.

### Revenue-generating Potential

No significant revenue is expected to be generated from this property initially. After acquisition, it will probably be several years before any significant public facilities might be developed. The amount of any future revenue will depend on the nature and extent of public use in the management plan for the property. The property has the potential for generating local economic benefits. The pine plantation that covers a large portion of the Bald Point project will be managed with the assistance of FFS. The site has considerable value and can be expected to provide significant revenue if acquired with the land. No other significant revenue would be expected over the short term after acquisition. The amount of future revenues from other than timber sales will depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities developed.

### Cooperators in Management Activities

Due to the potential for enhancement of the adjacent county park by this project area, coordination of management efforts may be desirable. On the Bald Point site, FFS will be consulted on forest management and timber issues related to the planning and implementation of a forest resource management plan. Other federal, state and local government agencies will be consulted, as appropriate, to further resource management, recreational and educational opportunities, and the development of the project lands for state park purposes.

### Management Cost Summary

USFWS	Startup	Recurring
Source	USFWS	USFWS
Salary	\$7,800	not provided
OPS	\$0	not provided
Expense	\$500	not provided
OCO	\$0	not provided
FCO	\$0	not provided
TOTAL	\$8,300	not provided

*Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted*



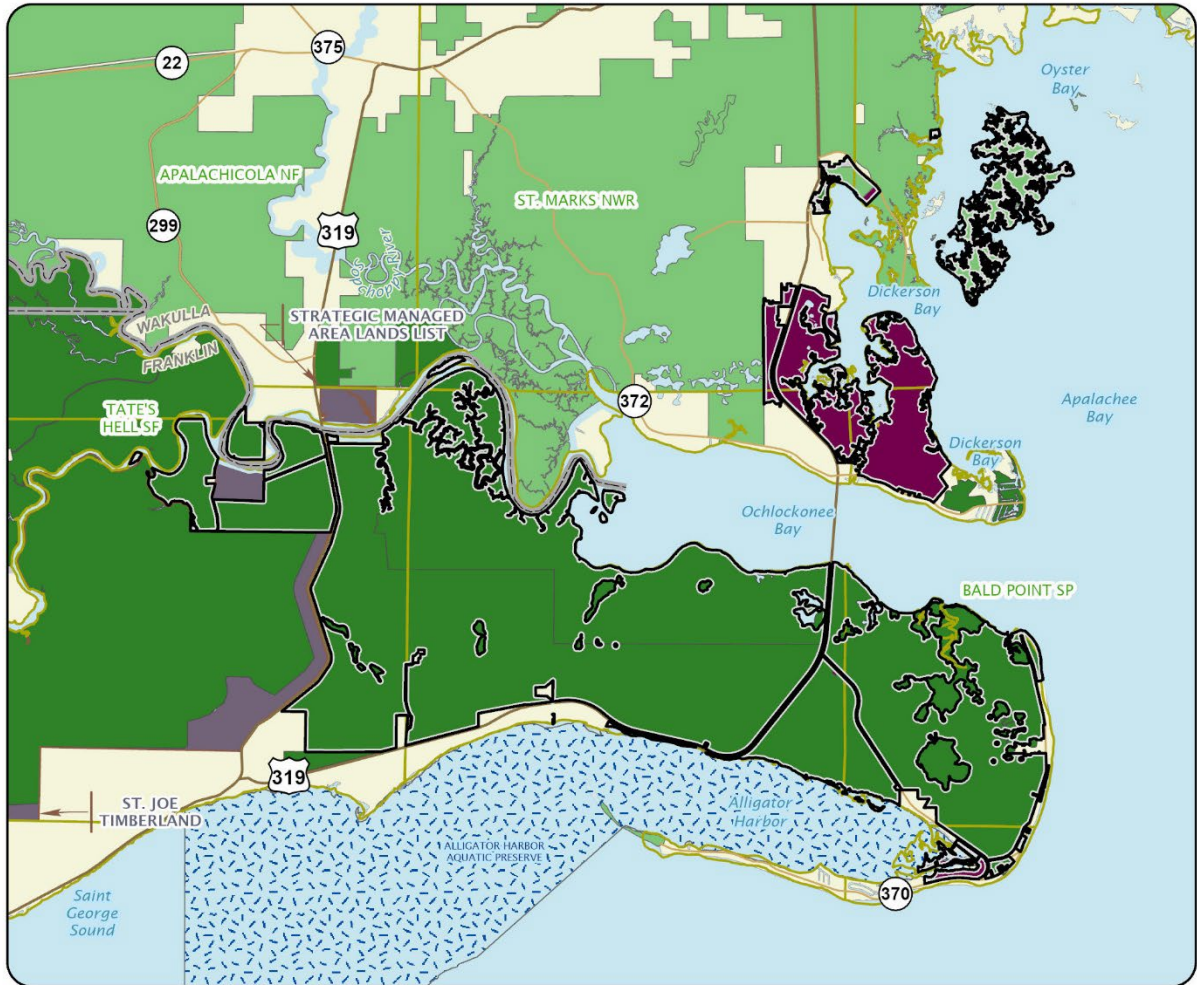


Management Cost Summary

DRP	Startup	Recurring
Source	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$0	\$0
OPS	\$7,092	\$7,092
Expense	\$13,269	\$13,269
OCO	\$80,000	\$1,000
FCO	\$13,269	\$0
TOTAL	\$262,132	\$72,361

*Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted*





## DICKERSON BAY/BALD POINT

### FRANKLIN AND WAKULLA COUNTIES

