

# Garcon Ecosystem

Climate Change Lands

Santa Rosa County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1995</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>7,446</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>4,502</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>2,944</i>
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$27,828,905</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Garcon Ecosystem project will preserve ecologically valuable habitat for endangered pitcher plants (*Sarracenia* spp.) and other rare species in the Pensacola Bay area. The Garcon Ecosystem project will protect some of the highest-quality pitcher plant prairies left in Florida, while also maintaining Pensacola Bay's water quality and allowing the public to experience this unique natural environment.

## General Description

Natural communities within this project are in good-to-excellent condition and include wet prairie, estuarine tidal marsh and wet flatwoods. The prairie community is species-rich and includes orchids and carnivorous plants such as pitcher plants, sundews, butterworts and bladderworts. Especially significant are the large populations of state endangered white-topped pitcher plant (*Sarracenia leucophylla*) and the globally imperiled panhandle lily (*Lilium iridollae*). The tracts are also habitat for the federally endangered reticulated flatwoods salamander (*Ambystoma bishopi*). Four cultural sites are known in the project area. The area's sensitive prairies are threatened by ditching, plant collecting and residential development.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Reticulated flatwoods salamander	G1/S1
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Louisiana yellow-eyed grass*</i>	G2G3/S1
<i>Spring hill flax*</i>	G2/S2
Saltmarsh topminnow	G3/S2
Louisiana seaside sparrow	G4T4/S1
<i>Nightflowering wild petunia*</i>	G3?/S2
<i>Pond rush*</i>	G5/S1
<i>Yellow fringeless orchid*</i>	G3G4/S2
<i>Pinewoods bluestem*</i>	G3/S3
<i>Panhandle lily*</i>	G3/S3
<i>*Plant species are in italics</i>	

**Public Use**

This project is designated as a preserve and is limited to uses such as nature study, hiking and fishing.

**Acquisition Planning**

**1994**

On November 18, 1994, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council combined the Prairies of Garcon and Garcon Point Conservation and Recreational Lands projects and renamed the new project Garcon Ecosystem. This fee simple project consisted of approximately 7,601 acres, multiple owners and had a taxable value of \$6,573,507.

Garcon Point – Consisted of approximately 21 owners. Phase I: FDIC [acquired by the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWFMD)]. Phase II: all other ownership except in sections 24 and 25. Phase III: ownership in sections 24 and 25.

Prairies of Garcon – Essential tracts included the larger ownerships of Jenkins (acquired by NFWFMD), Henzelman, Culpepper, Thompson and other ownerships greater than 160 acres. Phase II tracts included smaller ownerships and lots within Avalon Beach Subdivision.

**1998**

On February 5, 1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee simple, 845-acre addition to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by the owners’ representative, consisted of five owners and had a taxable value of \$483,356 in 1997.





NWFWMD will manage this addition that has been designated as non-essential, meaning it is important but not critical to the project.

### **2001**

In 2000 and 2001, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) acquired approximately 850.5 acres for \$1,419,955 with Preservation 2000 funding to create Yellow River Marsh Preserve State Park.

### **2002**

On October 25, 2002, NWFWMD acquired 10 acres from Perdido Key, Inc. for \$9,000.

### **2003**

On December 5, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) moved this project to Group A of the 2004 Florida Forever Priority List.

### **2007**

On July 10, 2007, 20 acres within the project boundary were donated (Woodlands Ventures of Pensacola for a value of \$2,620).

### **2011**

On December 9, 2011, ARC moved this project to the Climate Change Lands category.

### **2012**

On August 17, 2012, ARC removed 283 acres from the project because the 89 parcels making up that land had been developed or had become otherwise unmanageable.

### **2021**

DEP acquired, in fee simple, eight parcels (Springer, one parcel; Brown Family, seven parcels) totaling 138.20 acres to be managed as additions to Yellow River Marsh Preserve State Park.

### **2024**

On July 29, 2024, DEP acquired, in fee, 64.46 acres in Santa Rosa County from William O. Smith.

### **2025**

On April 16, 2025, DEP acquired, in fee, 41.05 acres in Santa Rosa County from Santa Rosa Business Holdings, LLC.





### Coordination

In November 1995, NFWFMD accepted \$1,025,350 of mitigation funds from the Santa Rosa Bridge Authority to acquire land (Jenkins) within the project boundary.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the Garcon Ecosystem project are: to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area; to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; and to conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems, landscapes and forests, in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect.

### Manager(s)

DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) is the lead manager for the northern portion of the project. NFWFMD is the lead manager for the southern portion of the project.

### Management Prospectus

#### **Qualifications for State Designation**

The project has the size, location and quality of resources to qualify as a "State Buffer Preserve" to the Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Preserve and adjacent Class II shellfish waters.

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

The Garcon Ecosystem project includes lands that require prescribed fire management.

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

Within the first year after acquisition, initial or intermediate activities will concentrate on site security, fire management planning, resource inventory and a complete management plan. Long-range plans for this property will generally be directed toward the restoration of disturbed areas and the perpetuation and maintenance of natural communities. Management activities will also stress the protection of threatened and endangered species. An all-season burning program will be established using conventional practices. Whenever possible, existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks will be used to contain and control prescribed and natural fires. An educational program for all age groups will be used in conjunction with a carefully designed hiking trail, to keep the public away from sensitive areas. Efforts to prohibit vehicle activity except in designated areas will be a major concern.





Infrastructure development will be confined to already disturbed areas and will be the absolute minimum required to allow public access, provide facilities for the public and to manage the property.

**Revenue-generating Potential**

No revenue is expected to be generated.

**Cooperators in Management Activities**

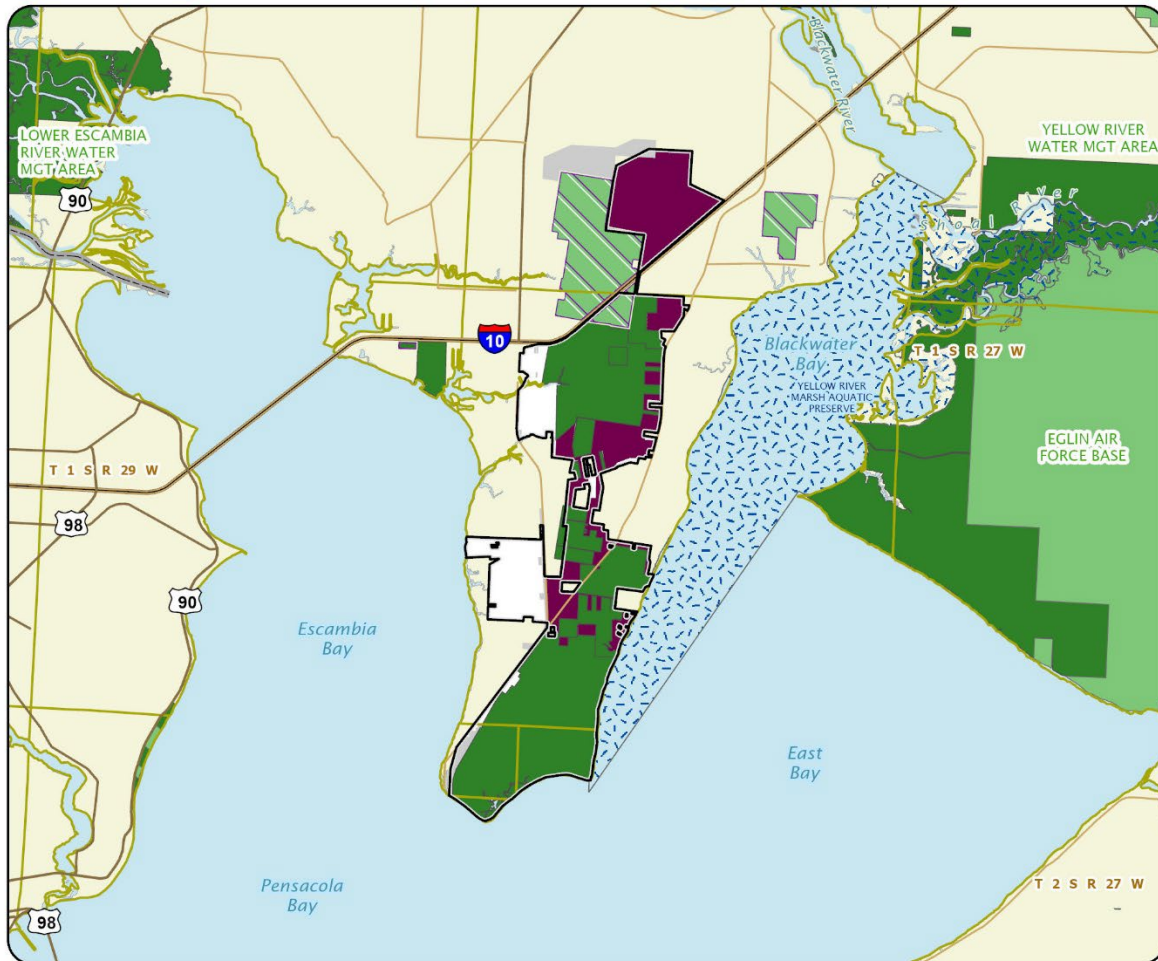
The Florida Forest Service may help with fire management.

Management Cost Summary

NWFWMDC Interim Management Budget	2000/2001
Salary	not provided
OPS	not provided
Expense	not provided
OCO	not provided
Other — Special	\$38,477
TOTAL	\$38,477

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### GARCON ECOSYSTEM

#### SANTA ROSA COUNTY

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

