

Gulf Hammock

Less-Than-Fee

Levy County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2004
<i>Project Acres</i>	25,611
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	25,611
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$66,258,975

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Gulf Hammock project will protect the uplands and wetlands that lie within the Withlacoochee River watershed, eventually draining into multiple coastal preserves. The project will also protect habitat critical for rare and imperiled species and aid in the increase of biodiversity. The project will support and rehabilitate natural functions of the land and water by restoring the hydrology that existed before silvicultural operations. The project has the potential to increase public recreation by providing passive recreation, including picnicking, hiking trails and environmental education.

General Description

Located in southwest Levy County, the Gulf Hammock project aims to protect, manage and restore wildlife habitat and water resources. Approximately 3,652 acres of the project are proposed for full-fee sale. The remaining acres would be protected by a less-than-fee conservation easement. Approximately 23,248 acres of land within the project area are currently managed in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) as Gulf Hammock Wildlife Management Area, the state's oldest wildlife management area (established in 1948).





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Eastern indigo snake	G2G3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Rafinesque's big-eared bat	G3/S1
<i>Tampa vervain*</i>	G2/S2
Eastern kingsnake	G5/S1S2
<i>Variable-leaved Indian-plantain*</i>	G3/S3
<i>Wood spurge*</i>	G5/S2
Little blue heron	G5/S4
<i>*Plant species are in italics</i>	

Public Use

The portion of Gulf Hammock proposed for less-than-fee acquisition does not provide for public access. However, hunting, hiking and primitive camping might be considered the most prominent public uses of the area proposed for full-fee purchase.

Acquisition Planning

2004

Of this project, 21,959 acres are proposed for less-than-fee easement. The property is owned by Plum Creek Timber Company. Most of the property that is offered in less-than-fee is currently being used for intensive silvicultural production. The 3,652 acres being offered in fee are located at the west end of the property and is more hydrologically and environmentally intact; it would be an addition to or buffer for the Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park. The Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) staff is continuing project development work with landowners to determine optimum boundaries and uses of the fee and less-than-fee portions of the project. The project had an estimated tax-assessed value of \$11,524,000.

On June 4, 2004, ARC added this project to Group B of Florida Forever projects.

2011

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project in the Less-Than-Fee category.

Coordination

FWC should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies including the Florida Forest Service and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in the management of the property.





Management Policy Statement

Since the principal purposes of the project include protecting biodiversity and providing resource-based public recreation and education opportunities, programs would conserve, protect, manage and/or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, wildlife populations, forests and water resources. The project area will be managed to provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping and hiking.

The portion of Gulf Hammock proposed for less-than-fee acquisition would be managed for conservation purposes by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.

Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of Gulf Hammock would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm continued conservation easement compliance would be coordinated by DEP's Division of State Lands.

FWC is recommended as lead manager for the portion of the project that would be acquired in full fee (3,652 acres); located at the west end of the property and being more intact both hydrologically and environmentally, it would be an addition to or buffer for the Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park. FWC currently manages most of the project area as the Gulf Hammock Wildlife Management Area.

Management Prospectus

DEP's Division of State Lands will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner. FWC submitted the following management plans for any full-fee purchases in this project:

Qualifications for State Designation

According to FNAI, the entire project area is a habitat conservation priority for rare species with the greatest conservation need. The project also provides habitat for many focal species, which are indicators of natural communities and suitable habitat conditions for other wildlife species. FWC indicates that 43 percent (11,105 acres) of the project area includes at least seven focal species. Focal species are those that are indicators of natural communities or suitable habitat conditions for many other species of wildlife. Many important conservation lands have become increasingly isolated and no longer support viable populations of large, wide-ranging mammals. The Gulf Hammock project would provide landscape connectivity that should benefit fish and wildlife resources by linking large areas of natural habitat. The project could also provide diverse outdoor recreational opportunities.





Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Some portions of the project include lands that are low-need tracts, requiring application of resource management methods, including the frequent use of prescribed fire where appropriate. Additional methods may be necessary for some management units in order to accomplish objectives for restoration to a desired future condition. FWC would conduct historic vegetation analysis to determine desired future conditions, objectives and restoration methods. This is especially important for conserving habitats and populations of imperiled or rare species.

The primary methods for the perpetuation of less disturbed natural communities might include reintroducing prescribed fire and control of human uses in certain management units; surveillance for and removal of infestations of exotic invasive plant species will be done. Biotic surveys would be important to accomplish during the early part of planned development and implementation because imperiled or rare species are expected to occur on the project. Development of facilities would be kept to the minimum level necessary to assure a high-quality recreational experience and such development would be confined to previously disturbed areas.

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

During the first year after acquisition, emphasis would be placed on site security, posting boundaries, public access, fire management, resource inventory and removal of refuse. A conceptual management plan would be developed by FWC describing the management goals and specific objectives necessary to implement future resource management.

Long-range goals would emphasize ecosystem management and wildlife conservation. Following the completion of plant community inventory and historic vegetation analysis, quantified vegetation management objectives would be developed pursuant to FWC's objective-based vegetation management process. Essential roads would be stabilized to provide all-weather public access and management operations. Programs providing multiple recreational uses would also be implemented.

An all-season prescribed burning management plan would be developed and implemented using conventional and biologically acceptable methods. Growing season prescribed burning would be used where appropriate to best achieve management objectives. Management activities would strive to manage natural plant communities to benefit native wildlife resources. These resources would be managed using acceptable silvicultural practices as appropriate. Archaeological and historic sites would be managed in coordination with the Florida





Department of State’s Division of Historical Resources whom lists two sites within the project area.

Environmentally sensitive areas (such as erosion-prone sites, outstanding natural areas and wetlands) would be identified, and appropriate protective measures would be implemented on those areas. Unnecessary roads, fire lanes and hydrological disturbances would be abandoned or restored as practical. Other existing infrastructure would be protected where possible. Infrastructure development would be the minimum required to provide public access, public facilities and security/management of the project area.

Revenue-generating Potential

Substantial revenue from forest product production (as it currently occurs) should continue. Management would seek to improve other revenue-generating potential in areas currently serving for forest products production by improving wildlife diversity and resource-based recreation in such areas.

Additional revenue would be generated from sales of hunting and fishing licenses, wildlife management area and other special hunting stamps. Some revenues might be realized in the future from recreational user fees and ecotourism activities if such projects could be economically developed.

Cooperators in management activities

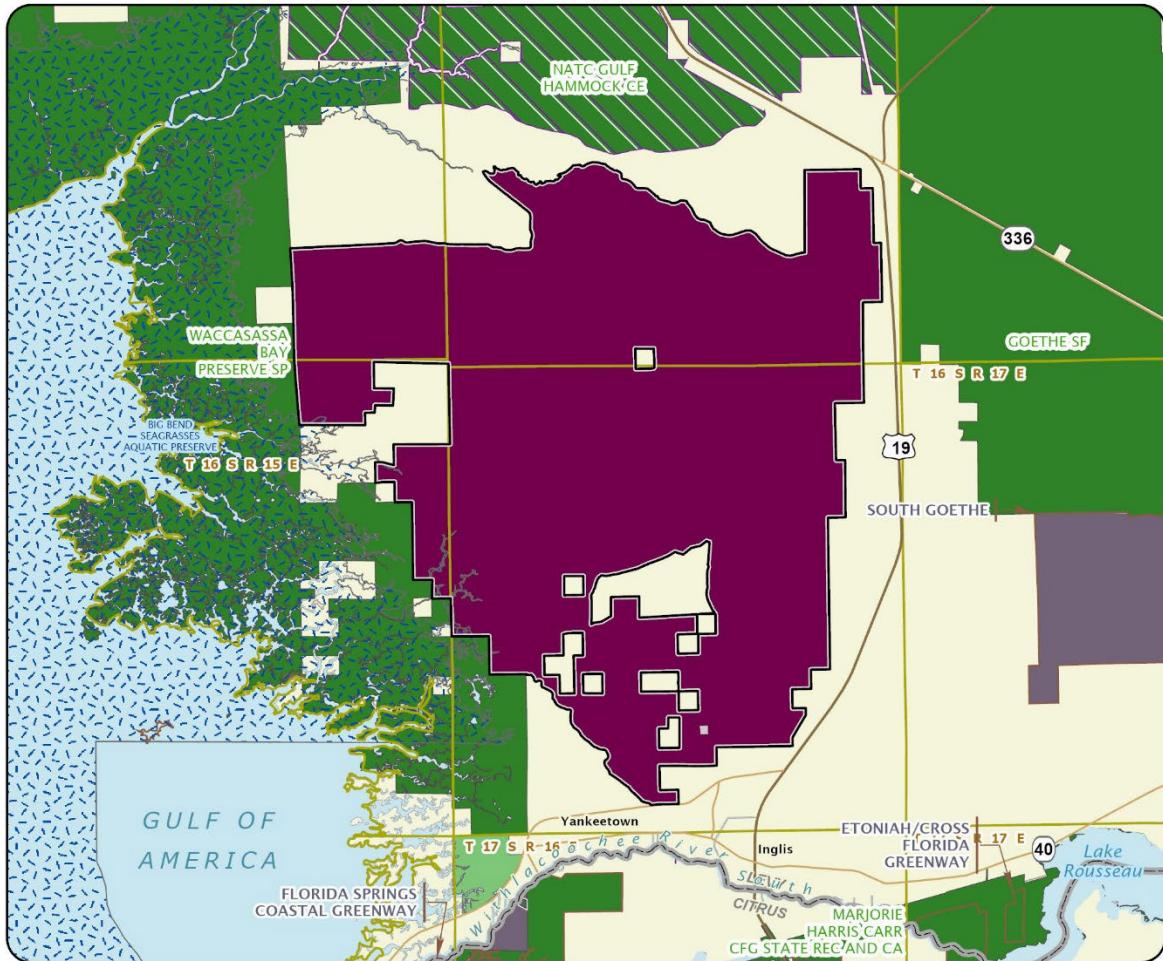
FWC should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies (including Florida Forest Service (and DEP) in management of the property.

Management Cost Summary

FWC	Startup	Recurring
	State and/or federal	State and/or federal
Source of Funds		
Resource Management	\$91,369	\$72,532
Administration	\$ 75,494	\$ 25,133
Support	\$149,080	\$ 31,566
Capital Improvements	\$185,583	\$ 25,347
Visitor Services/Recreation	\$ 1,285	\$ 141
Law Enforcement	\$ 2,534	\$ 2,534
TOTAL	\$505,345	\$157,253

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





GULF HAMMOCK

LEVY COUNTY

