

Hawkins Ranch

Less-Than-Fee

Sarasota County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>2025</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>3,311</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>3,311</i>
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$83,215,320</i>

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Hawkins Ranch project would help safeguard the natural and scenic resources of the Myakka River State Park and provide a critical landscape buffer for the park's Deep Hole Wilderness Area. The project would provide wildlife habitat and critical water quantity and quality protection for the Myakka River, Cow Pen Slough, Sarasota Bay and Charlotte Harbor.

General Description.

The Hawkins Ranch is the final large, undeveloped property between Myakka River State Park and nearby suburban development. Hawkins Ranch shares its southern border with Sarasota County's Pinelands Reserve and its eastern boundary with Myakka River State Park. This project joins a network of existing conservation lands stretching to the Peace River.

Drainage from the eastern portion of Hawkins Ranch flows into the Myakka River and eventually drains into Charlotte Harbor. The western portion of the site drains to Cow Pen Slough and ultimately to Sarasota Bay. Hawkins Ranch lies within the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Southern Planning Region for water supply and the Southern Water Use Caution Area. This property is also identified as critical for conservation as part of the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Charlotte Harbor Watershed Project.

The Hawkins Ranch is a working cow/calf operation. As such, much of the property is improved pasture, dominated by bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum*). Approximately 4 acres are used for haying. Improvements on-site include four homes, two pools and barns and sheds used to support the cattle operation. A utility corridor crosses the proposal from north to south and a network of drainage ditches has been installed throughout the pastures. Invasive species such





as Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*) and tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*), although widespread, were observed to occur at low densities.

Approximately 42 percent of the property is in relatively natural condition. Large depression marshes comprise the predominant natural areas on Hawkins Ranch. These areas have generally been affected by grazing, although marshes in the northeastern part of the ranch reflect more native species diversity than marshes elsewhere on site. Mesic flatwoods were likely the historic dominant landcover on-site, with a few areas remaining on-site and in fair condition.

Approximately 94 percent of Hawkins Ranch is within Priority 3 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. A wide diversity of wildlife and plant species were observed during the site assessment including the river otter (*Lontra canadensis*) and Florida butterfly orchid (*Encyclia tampensis*). Imperiled bird species observed include the sandhill crane (*Antigone canadensis pratensis*), little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*) and wood stork (*Mycteria americana*). According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the federally designated threatened crested caracara (*Caracara plancus*) may also use the property.

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida sandhill crane	G5T2/S2
Wood stork	G4/S2
Glossy ibis	G5/S3
Snowy egret	G5/S3
Little blue heron	G5/S4

Public Use

The Hawkins Ranch project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition with no public access.

Acquisition Planning

2025

On October 10, 2025, the Acquisition and Restoration Council voted to add the Hawkins Ranch project to the 2026 Florida Forever Priority List.

Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the Hawkins Ranch project would be managed for conservation purposes by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.





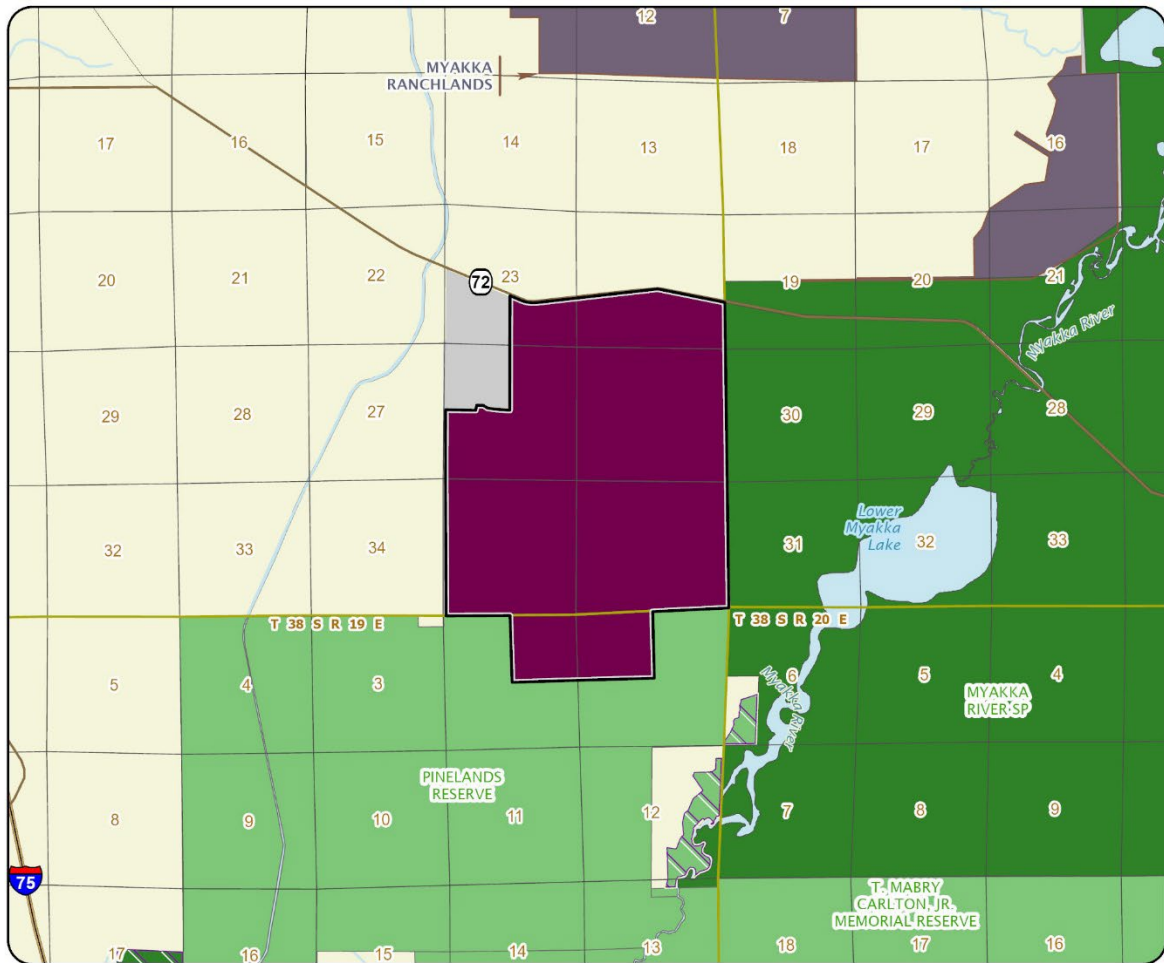
Manager

If acquired as less-than-fee, management of the Hawkins Ranch project would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm compliance with the conditions of the conservation easement would be coordinated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of State Lands.

Management Prospectus

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





HAWKINS RANCH

SARASOTA COUNTY

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

