

# Ichetucknee Trace

Critical Natural Lands

Columbia County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1997</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>2,786</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>1,078</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>1,708</i>
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$20,595,542</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Ichetucknee Trace project will protect the route of a major underground conduit supplying local springs with fresh water and will improve the quality and quantity of water within Ichetucknee Springs State Park. Acquisition will also provide the public with recreational and geological education opportunities.

## General Description

A dry valley known as the Ichetucknee Trace runs north and east of Ichetucknee Springs marking the path of a major underground channel that delivers groundwater to local springs. Though Ichetucknee Springs State Park protects the springs and much of the Ichetucknee River, limerock mining and other land uses near the area's sinks pose a threat to the channel that flows to the springs. Limerock mines and sinks along the trace have exposed the conduit in some areas, leaving these areas vulnerable to pollutants from mining and encroaching development.

The goal of the Ichetucknee Trace project is to preserve the quality and quantity of water flowing into the first magnitude Ichetucknee Springs by protecting the trace. The Ichetucknee Trace project includes two active limerock mines and seven sinkhole sites. More than 80 percent of the 450-acre limerock mine has no natural communities on it, but a small area of upland mixed forest and floodplain forest remains northeast of the mines. The majority of the areas around the five sinkholes are highly disturbed but include some fair quality forests.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Santa Fe cave crayfish	G1/S1
North Florida spider cave crayfish	G1G2/S1S2
Pallid cave crayfish	G1G2/S1S2
Hobbs's cave amphipod	G2G3/S2S3

**Public Use**

This project qualifies for use as a fish management area, recreation park or geologic site. With appropriate contouring, the water-filled mine pits could serve as a recreational fishery or fish hatchery and a county park.

**Acquisition Planning**

**1996**

This project was ranked for the first time on December 5, 1996.

**1999**

On July 29, 1999, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added 636 acres: Rose Sink (since acquired); Saylor Sink (acquired); and Clay Hole Creek.

**2000**

In January 2000, the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund authorized the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Division of State Lands to purchase 60 acres outside the project boundary.

On July 18, 2000, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added 200 acres to the project.

**2002**

On August 9, 2002, TPL donated a two-acre parcel around Rose Sink to the state.

**2003**

On August 15, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added 7.8 acres to the project boundary.

On August 15, 2003, ARC approved the acquisition of the McCormick Sink Site (147 acres) within the project boundary.



**2006**

On December 8, 2006, ARC approved moving the project from Group B to Group A of the Florida Forever Priority List.

**2007**

On February 16, 2007, ARC approved a fee-simple, 120-acre addition (Kirby parcel within the Limerock Mines Site) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by John Hankinson, Jr., consisted of one landowner (B. L. Kirby), and one parcel with a taxable value of \$26,160. DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) will manage this essential parcel.

On June 15, 2007, ARC approved a fee-simple, 1,050-acre addition (Sinks Addition) to the project boundary. The proposal was sponsored by 1000 Friends of Florida, consisted of 34 parcels, 18 landowners and a taxable value of \$1,397,263. The O'Stern-Pittman Tract, Bishop Tract, Ichetucknee Springs East Addition and acreage added to the existing Limerock Mines Site and Ichetucknee Springs North make up this addition. DRP will manage these essential parcels.

**2010**

On December 29, 2010, 12.96 acres in Rose Sink (Kirby Mine Area), valued at \$214,372, was donated by TPL. DRP will manage this acreage.

**2011**

On December 9, 2011, this project was placed in the Critical Natural Lands category.

**Coordination**

Columbia County is considered an acquisition partner for this project. TPL is an intermediary.

**Management Policy Statement**

The project should be managed under the multiple-use concept. Management activities should be directed first toward conservation and restoration of resources and second toward integrating carefully controlled consumptive uses such as fishing. Managers should control access to the project; limit public motor vehicles to one or a few main roads; restrict the use of fertilizers, herbicides and gasoline-powered boats to protect water quality; inventory the resources; contour the mine pits to provide shallow littoral zones for colonization by aquatic plants and animals; recontour spoil piles so they can be revegetated with native trees, shrubs and grasses; reforest cleared, but unmined, areas with original species; control exotic pest plants that may invade the disturbed parts of the site; and monitor management activities to ensure that they are actually preserving resources. Managers should limit the number and size





of recreational facilities, ensure that they avoid the most sensitive resources and site them in already disturbed areas when possible.

### Manager(s)

DRP is recommended as lead manager for the site adjacent to the existing state park, and Columbia County as lead manager for the other nine sites. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is recommended as co-manager for the limerock mine site.

### Management Prospectus

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

The project site can be used for a variety of compatible recreational activities such as canoeing, hiking, biking, picnicking, environmental education and nature studies. It also qualifies as a fish management area.

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

Habitat restoration will require intense management activities involving extensive earthmoving and some actual excavation of quarry pit perimeters to create desired gradual slopes and provide additional shallow littoral zones. Importantly, this excavation work will be vital from a public safety standpoint as existing quarry sides are perpendicular. Considerable mining refuse is anticipated to be present and will need to be removed. Some actual salvage or demolition may be necessary. Earthmoving to abolish some roads and spread available soil will be extensive but will allow plant succession to proceed. Because there is no valuable habitat to manage, succession is the appropriate strategy. Earthmoving will allow work on planned vehicle access and parking in areas where eventual erosion to lakes can be precluded. Some fencing to prohibit or direct vehicular and non-vehicular access will be necessary. Plant community inventory and restoration of disturbed mined areas by planting or other techniques will be secondary to major initial physical reconfiguration of the landscape and mine pits.

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

During the first year after acquisition, emphasis will be on site security, posting boundaries, fencing, public access, resource inventory and removal of existing refuse. A conceptual management plan will be developed by DRP, Columbia County and FWC describing future resource management. Because of the expense of excavating and earth moving and prerequisite planning/bidding, most of this actual work will not be scheduled for year one. The second year will concentrate on accomplishment of initial phases of conceptual plan (earthmoving and excavation). This work will proceed into the third year, when some infrastructure work on facilities will commence. Long-range plans will stress fish and wildlife habitat creation and





management and family fishing opportunities. Future infrastructure may include a universally accessible fishing pier, docks for canoes and small boats, an informational pavilion and designated hiking and biking trails. However, it is important to note that management activities will stress protection of water quality.

**Revenue-generating Potential**

Some potential for the sale of timber exists on this property. Additional revenue-generating potential would be the sale of fishing licenses, special use or entrance fees.

**Cooperators in Management Activities**

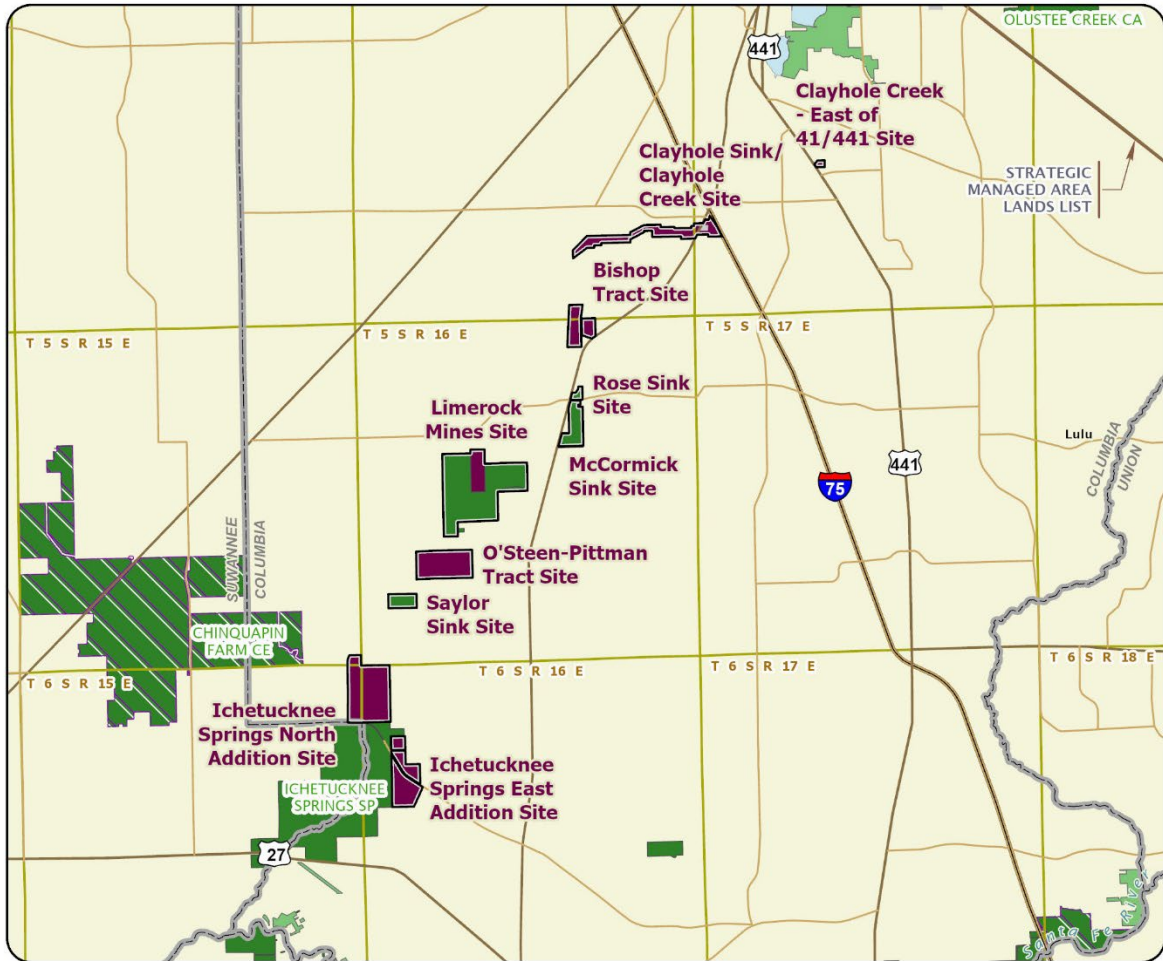
DRP, Columbia County and FWC will cooperate with various government agencies in managing the area.

Management Cost Summary

FWC		Startup	Recurring
Source of Funds	Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) Program/State Game Trust Fund (SGTF)		CARL/SGTF
Salary		\$40,000	\$75,000
OPS		\$10,000	\$10,000
Expense		\$20,000	\$200,000
OCO		\$35,000	\$20,000
FCO		\$0	\$20,000
TOTAL		\$105,000	\$325,000

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### ICHETUCKNEE TRACE

#### COLUMBIA COUNTY

