

Lake Santa Fe

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Alachua and Bradford Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>10,529</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>2,125</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>8,404</i>
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$52,631,494</i>

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Lake Santa Fe project will provide protection to the only remaining shoreline of Lake Santa Fe that supports wading bird nesting, natural shoreline fauna, historic cypress fringe, swamps and mostly undisturbed wetlands. It will protect existing publicly owned wetlands and swamp systems by maintaining water quality and preventing additional development. Acquisition of these lands will support the health and function of the Santa Fe Swamp and ensure adequate water quality and quantity.

General Description

The Lake Santa Fe project is proposed as fee simple, with possible use of less-than-fee on some parcels. The project would build upon the Suwannee River Water Management District's (SRWMD) Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area, which includes most of the Santa Fe Swamp and Lake Alto Swamp. It is designed to protect undeveloped portions of the Lake Santa Fe shoreline, as well as the surface headwaters of the swamps through prevention of further development and septic input. The project is segmented by lakefront residential development, limiting the lake edge protection and recreational opportunities.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Narrowleaf Naiad*</i>	G3/S2
Wood stork	G4/S2
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Southeastern fox squirrel	G5T5/S3
Osprey	G5/S3S4

**Plant species are in italics*

Public Use

Several of the parcels in the project qualify for passive recreational opportunities including picnicking and nature trails. One parcel may provide for more diverse opportunities such as canoeing, fishing and bird watching. Most parcels in this project boundary are in or near a medium priority multi-use trail corridor. The project may also help complete the Florida National Scenic Trail, a statewide non-motorized trail that crosses several Florida Forever project sites. The trail is a congressionally designated national scenic trail.

Acquisition Planning

2003

On December 5, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added the Lake Santa Fe project to Group A of the 2004 Florida Forever Priority List. This fee simple project, sponsored by the Lake Santa Fe Dwellers Association and The Nature Conservancy, consisted of approximately 10,574 acres, multiple owners and a 2003 taxable value of \$3,914,013. The Rayonier tract was identified as essential to this project with the Lake Santa Fe shoreline protection as a concurrent priority.

2008

On February 7, 2008, Alachua County and SRWMD acquired the Lake Alto LLC (120 acres) tract in Lake Alto Preserve North.

2011

On December 9, 2011, this project was placed in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

2012

On April 20, 2012, ARC removed 174.5 acres from the project at the landowner’s request.





2020

On March 6, 2020, Alachua County acquired the Padgett Tract (318 acres) in Lake Alto Preserve North, of which 284 acres are within the project boundary.

On June 5, 2020, Alachua County purchased Black Lake Preserve (288 acres), of which 282 acres are within the project boundary.

2021

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) acquired in fee simple 69.42 acres from Milledge Murphy and Kathryn Murphy that will be managed for conservation purposes by Alachua County.

2022

On February 8, 2022, Alachua County acquired one additional acre of the Padgett Tract in Lake Alto Preserve North, of which 285 acres are within the project boundary.

Coordination

SRWMD and Alachua County are acquisition partners. Originally, SRWMD expressed an interest in buffering the Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area.

Management Policy Statement

The primary management goals for the Lake Santa Fe project are: protect Florida's surface water quality; protect wetland and aquatic habitat for species associated with freshwater swamps and lakes; preserve nesting and resting habitat for upland and aquatic species; provide natural resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities for the people of Florida, including fishing, boating, hiking, camping and nature appreciation; help buffer and protect existing conservation lands at the Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area; and protect Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community and landscape levels.

Manager(s)

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are recommended as unified managers of the fee simple portions of the project. Alachua County and SRWMD purchases will be managed by those entities.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

This project is proposed for a unified Management Prospectus. Several parcels are adjacent to, and would provide buffer for, SRWMD's Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area and several smaller





named lakes (including Bonnet Lake, Hickory Lake, Lake Alto and Little Lake Santa Fe). The project area is two miles west of the Camp Blanding Military Reservation, and three miles northeast of the Austin Cary Memorial Forest (managed by the University of Florida).

FFS and FWC are prepared to share all management responsibilities for Lake Santa Fe under the unified management concept that both agencies are developing. Under unified management, agencies will identify mutually acceptable goals that further the long-term protection of the site's plant and wildlife resources, promote sound stewardship of land, timber and water resources, and provide the public with access and quality recreational opportunities.

Both agencies agree that the project has the capability to provide important protection for fish and wildlife habitat in a manner that is compatible with sound silvicultural practices. Since the project goals include protecting biodiversity and providing resource-based public recreational and educational opportunities, programs would be developed to manage ecosystems for multiple use. Conservation and protection of environmentally unique native habitats and threatened and endangered species should also be an important management goal for the project. Particular attention should be directed to the protection of wetlands which are important habitat to the state and federally listed flatwoods salamander (*Ambystoma* spp.); wetland drainage and silviculture conversion has contributed to the decline of this species throughout its range.

The project area will be managed to provide opportunities for bicycling, boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, kayaking, picnicking and wildlife viewing. DEP and University of Florida Statewide Greenways System Planning Project shows approximately 27 percent of the project area to be suitable for priority 1 or 2 recreational trails. The managing agencies would promote recreation and environmental education in the natural environment.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Most of the project is a medium-need tract that will require up-front resource management, including frequent prescribed fire where appropriate. About 60 percent of the project area has been subjected to ground cover disturbance due to past silviculture. Consequently, additional effort will be required to restore to a desired future condition.

FFS and FWC propose to work cooperatively to assess site management needs and develop the Conceptual Management Plan for the site. Examples of situations that require cooperative effort include restoring flatwoods previously managed for timber production, removing off-site species, promoting regeneration of native ground cover and reforesting ruderal and recently harvested areas. As part of the unified management approach, the managing agencies will





conduct an historic vegetation analysis to determine appropriate desired future conditions and identify appropriate restoration methods and tools. Other unified management priorities include protecting and restoring forested wetlands, and the identification, control and follow-up monitoring of invasive exotic species. Biotic surveys would be conducted as part of early unified management activities. Due to the presence of imperiled or rare species expected to occur within the project, it is anticipated that resource inventories would be an initial priority under the unified management approach.

Environmentally sensitive areas (such as erosion-prone sites, listed species habitats, outstanding natural areas and wetlands) are to be identified during the initial resource inventory to implement appropriate protective measures for each specific area. Such inventories are considered vital to unified management planning efforts directed at facility and infrastructure development and the design and implementation of recreational use programs.

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

During the first year after acquisition, both agencies operating under the unified management approach will emphasize site security, posting boundaries, public access for low-intensity outdoor recreation, fire management, resource inventory and removing refuse. Both managing agencies will meet frequently to coordinate task assignments and cooperate with other state agencies, local governments and other appropriate participants as it affects management of the project site. Both management agencies will participate in the joint development of a Combined Management Plan specifying area management goals and objectives.

Goals intended for long-term implementation would emphasize multiple-use management and the conservation of the site's natural resources including timber, fish and wildlife, and water. These goals include restoring habitat and hydrology and conserving and protecting imperiled or rare species. Following completion of plant community inventory and historic vegetation analysis, quantified vegetation management objectives would be developed pursuant to an objective-based vegetation management process. Where practical, disturbed sites would be restored to conditions expected to occur in naturally functioning ecosystems, including re-establishment of species expected to occur naturally on specific sites. Management would emphasize enhancement of abundance and spatial distribution of imperiled and rare species. Essential roads would be stabilized to provide all-weather public access and management operations. Programs providing multiple recreational uses would also be implemented.

Both agencies will work towards the development of a fire management plan that maximizes natural resource protection and enhancement. Most of this project area has not been burned by prescribed fire in recent years. Whenever possible, existing roads, black lines, foam lines and





natural breaks will be utilized to contain and control both prescribed and natural fires. Growing season prescribed burning would be used where appropriate to best achieve management objectives. Timber resources will be managed using acceptable silvicultural practices. Thinning of timber, introduction of prescribed fire and sustainable forestry management practices could provide silvicultural products, ecological and recreational benefits. Archaeological and historic sites would be managed in coordination with the Florida Department of State’s Division of Historical Resources.

Both agencies will work to develop a road plan that identifies the roads to be used for access by the public, and roads that are required for administrative use. Unnecessary roads, fire lanes and hydrological disturbances would be restored as practical. The road plan would ensure that the public has appropriate access and sensitive resources are protected. Other existing infrastructure necessary for management would be protected to the extent possible. Infrastructure development would be the minimum required to serve the needs of the public and would include provisions for facilities necessary for the security and management of the project area.

Revenue-generating Potential

Timber sales would be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions, under a multiple-use management concept. Additional revenue would be generated from sales of hunting licenses, fishing licenses, wildlife management area permits and other special hunting permits. Future revenues might also be realized in the future from recreational user fees and ecotourism activities. Fifteen percent of all gross revenues will be returned to the county from which funds were generated.

Cooperators in Management Activities

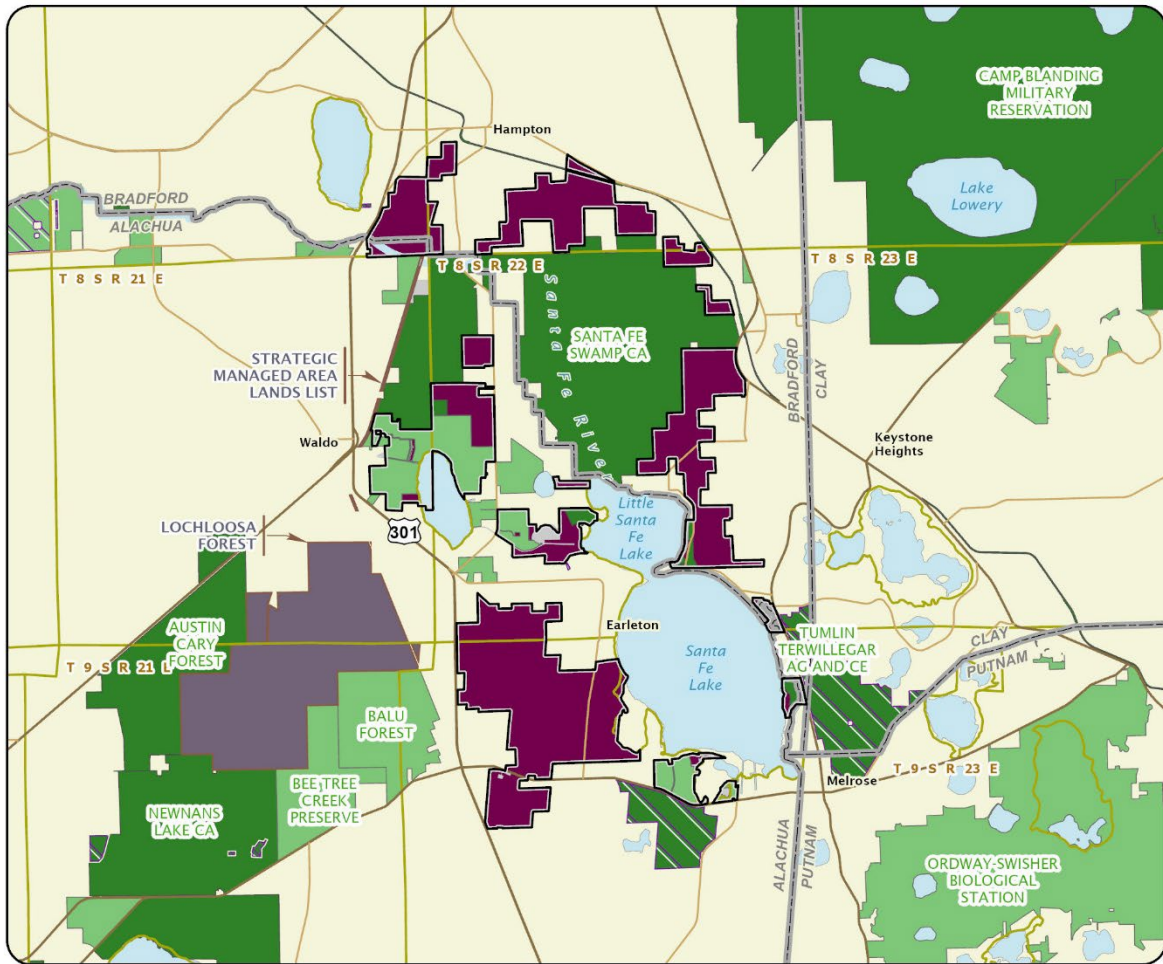
The unified managers (FFS and FWC) should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies, including SRWMD, to manage the project area.

Management Cost Summary

FFS and FWC	Startup	Recurring
Source	Land Acquisition	LATF
	Trust Fund (LATF)	
Salary	Not Provided	Not Provided
OPS	Not Provided	Not Provided
Expense	\$1,412,903	\$124,743
OCO	\$404,974	\$248,465
TOTAL	\$1,817,877	\$373,208

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





LAKE SANTA FE

ALACHUA AND BRADFORD COUNTIES

