

# Terra Ceia

Climate Change Lands

Manatee County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1996</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>4,075</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>2,159</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>1,916</i>
<i>2025 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$29,780,506</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Terra Ceia project will preserve mangrove swamps and flatwoods on the islands and mainland around Terra Ceia Bay, some of the last natural lands left on the southeast shore of Tampa Bay. The project will protect and restore this natural area, preserve the fishery and Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*) feeding grounds in Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve and give the public an area in which to fish, boat and enjoy the original landscape of Tampa Bay.

## General Description

The Terra Ceia project is two-thirds mangrove swamp and one-third a mix of xeric hammock, flatwoods and old fields colonized by Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*). The area is particularly significant for the protection it offers to bird rookeries, including the nearby Bird Island, one of the top two rookeries in Florida. The project will support the conservation of the adjacent Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve (an Outstanding Florida Water); its seagrass beds are used heavily by manatees, and its nursery areas are crucial for fish and invertebrates within this important Florida fishery. Sixty-nine archaeological sites, mostly middens, are within the project and more are likely to be discovered. The natural resources in the project are vulnerable to alteration or destruction by development and invasion by exotic plant species. Growth pressures are intense, so endangerment is high.





Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Florida manatee	G2G3T2/S2S3
Florida big-headed tiger beetle	G2/S2
<i>Banded wild-pine*</i>	G5/S3
<i>*Plant species are in italics</i>	

**Public Use**

This project qualifies as a state buffer preserve, with uses such as boating and fishing, and activities like picnicking and hiking in accessible uplands.

**Acquisition Planning**

**1996**

On December 5, 1996, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added the Terra Ceia project to the Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) list. This fee-simple acquisition, sponsored by Tampa Bay Aquatic Preserve, consisted of 2,612 acres, multiple owners and a 1995 taxable value of \$8,059,357. The essential parcels were identified as Hendry Corp; Reeder; Schater; Huber; Blalock; and First Union/Larson. Before the project’s addition to the CARL list, the state’s acquisition partner, Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), acquired Terra Ceia Isles.

**1998**

On October 15, 1998, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council designated an additional 843 acres as essential.

**2000**

SWFWMD acquired the Reeder (20 acres) and Schater parcels (39.1 acres) in 2000 with the state contributing half of the funding.

**2007**

On June 15, 2007, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) approved a fee-simple 395-acre addition (Frog and McMullen Creek Addition) to the project boundary. The proposal was sponsored by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, DEP’s Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) and SWFWMD. The addition consisted of 33 landowners and 61 parcels. DRP is the recommended manager for most of the site. Parcels in Frog Creek already owned and managed by SWFWMD will continue to be managed by them.





## **2009**

In June 2009, a donation of 40.06 acres was received from SWFWMD.

## **2010**

On August 13, 2010, ARC approved a 251-acre (\$51,544,946 just value) reduction to the project boundary due to residential/commercial/infrastructure development.

## **2011**

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project in the Climate Change Lands category of Florida Forever projects.

## **2025**

In February 2025, ARC removed approximately 499 acres from the project boundary that were deemed unsuitable for state acquisition.

### Coordination

SWFWMD is an acquisition partner. DEP received a grant of \$504,731 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire Rattlesnake Key and Joe's Island.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary objective of management of the Terra Ceia project is to preserve and restore the coastal natural communities, ranging from xeric and maritime hammocks to coastal strand and mangrove swamps that remain around the Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve. Achieving this objective will protect the resources of the aquatic preserve and play an important part in protecting and restoring the Tampa Bay estuary, the largest open-water estuary in Florida. The project should be managed under the single-use concept. Management activities should be directed first toward preserving 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; thoroughly inventory the resources; restore hydrological disturbances; implement prescribed fire management; strictly limit timbering; and monitor management activities to ensure that they are preserving the resources of the aquatic preserve. 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. The project includes nearly all the coastal undeveloped land south of Port Manatee and around Terra Ceia Bay and consequently has the size and location to achieve its primary objective.





### Manager(s)

DRP is the designated manager. Parcels in Frog Creek already owned and managed by SWFWMD will continue to be managed by that agency.

### Management Prospectus

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

This project qualifies as a state buffer preserve to protect the resources of the Terra Ceia Aquatic Preserve.

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

The Terra Ceia project generally includes lands that are low need tracts, requiring basic resource management and protection.

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

Management activities will seek to protect the water quality and the highly productive marine habitat of the aquatic preserve by maintaining the project area in a substantially natural condition; preserve and protect significant endangered and threatened species including the Florida manatee, roseate spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), tricolored heron (*Egretta tricolor*), least tern (*Sternula antillarum*), snowy egret (*Egretta thula*), reddish egret (*Egretta rufescens*) and American oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*); preserve and protect significant archaeological sites; restore islands to a natural state which will include removal of exotic vegetation and habitat restoration activities; and establish a self-guided canoe trail between the islands for use by the general public.

Within the first year after acquisition, activities will concentrate on the site security of the mainland property and resource inventory. The site's natural resources will be inventoried, and a management plan will be formulated. Long-range plans for this property will be to remove exotic plants, restore disturbed areas and perpetuate and maintain natural communities. Management practices will also stress the protection of the water quality of the aquatic preserve by maintaining the project area in a substantially natural condition, the protection of threatened and endangered species and the preservation of the significant archaeological sites for professional investigation.

#### **Revenue-generating Potential**

No revenue is expected to be generated from this property.



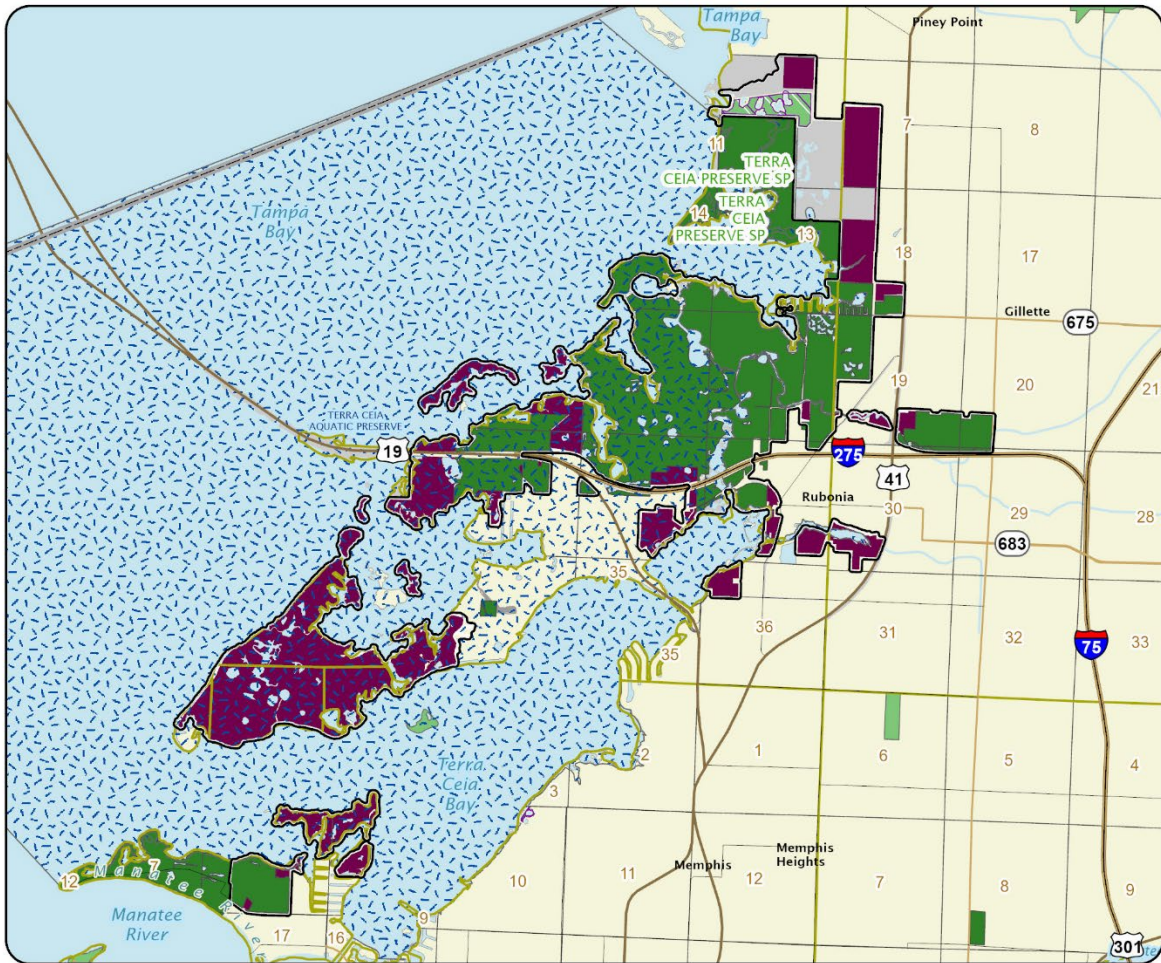


### Management Cost Summary

<u>DRP</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Salary (2 FTE)	\$62,000	not provided
OPS	\$0	not provided
Expense	\$10,000	not provided
OCO	\$100,000	not provided
FCO	\$500,000	not provided
TOTAL	\$672,000	not provided

*Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted*





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