

Caloosahatchee Ecoscape

Critical Natural Lands

Glades, Hendry

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1998
<i>Project Acres</i>	18,455
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	8,861
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$2,610,700
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	9,594
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$62,253,612

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Caloosahatchee Ecoscape project will provide a large landscape link within the citrus groves and cattle ranches of rural Hendry County. The project includes important habitat for the Florida panther, the Florida scrub jay, wading birds, and prairie birds like the Crested caracara and will preserve a connection of natural land between the Okaloacoochee Slough to the south and additional private and public conservation land to the north.

General Description

The project is a mosaic of wet prairies, cypress basin, dome swamp, mesic flatwoods, wet flatwoods, depressional marshes, and scrub. Most of the natural communities on the properties have been impacted by clearing and drainage from improved pasture development or farming. Despite the disturbed plant communities, the project provides important habitat for a variety of listed wildlife species. Most of the land is within the Barron Water Control District and canals have altered the natural hydrology to the extent that no significant natural water resources remain. Eleven archaeological sites are known from the project area, some with material dated back to the Archaic period.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Florida panther	G5T1/S1
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Florida scrub-jay	G1G2/S1S2
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Big Cypress fox squirrel	G5T2/S2
Crested caracara	G5/S2
Bald eagle	G5/S3

Public Use

This project qualifies as a WMA with uses such as hunting, hiking, camping, picnicking, and other resource-based recreation activities.

Acquisition Planning

1998

The initial proposal is 16,055 acres. The three largest ownerships, IMC Agrico, Floriland Dairy (Milicevic) and Atlantic Gulf Communities, are designated essential. The owners of the Floriland Dairy tract (Milicevic) have indicated they would consider negotiating a Less-Than-Fee sale at some time in the future.

1999

On March 26, 1999, the LAAC added 2,400 acres to the project.

2002

In 2002, a conservation easement was placed on the LaBelle Ranch (2,994 acres for \$2,320,700).

2003

In 2003, 161 acres of land was acquired fee-simple by the State of Florida for \$290,000.

2008

On June 13, 2008, the ARC moved the Caloosahatchee Ecoscape project to the A List of Florida Forever projects to expedite acquisition.

2009

On November 4, 2009, Panther Passage Conservation Bank Conservation Easement (1,292 acres) was purchased and is managed by FWC.

2011

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

2020

On June 12, 2020, the ARC approved the Amtel Farms addition of 2,207-acres in Glades and Hendry County to the project boundary.

On December 11, 2020, the ARC approved the removal of 2,213-acres in Glades and Hendry County from the project boundary.

Coordination

TNC is considered an acquisition partner.

Management Policy Statement

The project area has been highly impacted by timbering and other clearing for farming and grazing. Management goals include the restoration and maintenance of native plant and animal communities to the extent feasible and the provision of compatible, nature-based recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and nature study.

Manager(s)

FWC



Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation

The project will provide a refuge for threatened animals like the Florida panther and black bear, sandhill crane, wood stork, and crested caracara, and a variety of other endangered species, as well as species of special concern. It will protect habitat for game species like white-tailed deer and turkey as well as provide the public with a large area for natural-resource-based recreation. The project is also within an area where FWC has conducted significant panther and bear research.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Hydrologic manipulation and conversion of native range to improved pastures will require habitat restoration. Urbanization within, and adjacent to, the proposed project boundary will require that any large-scale controlled burning efforts be coordinated between appropriate state and federal agencies and the local affected residents.

Management implementation, Public access, Site security and Protection of infrastructure

During the first year after acquisition, posting the boundary, erecting entrance signs, and resource inventory will be a priority. A conceptual management plan will also be written. Location and control of exotic plant species will be ongoing. The long-term management goals shall be to restore and maintain native plant and animal communities to the extent feasible, with a secondary goal of providing compatible nature-based recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and nature study. Establishment of access and other facilities necessary for approved nature-based recreational activities will be developed as funding permits.

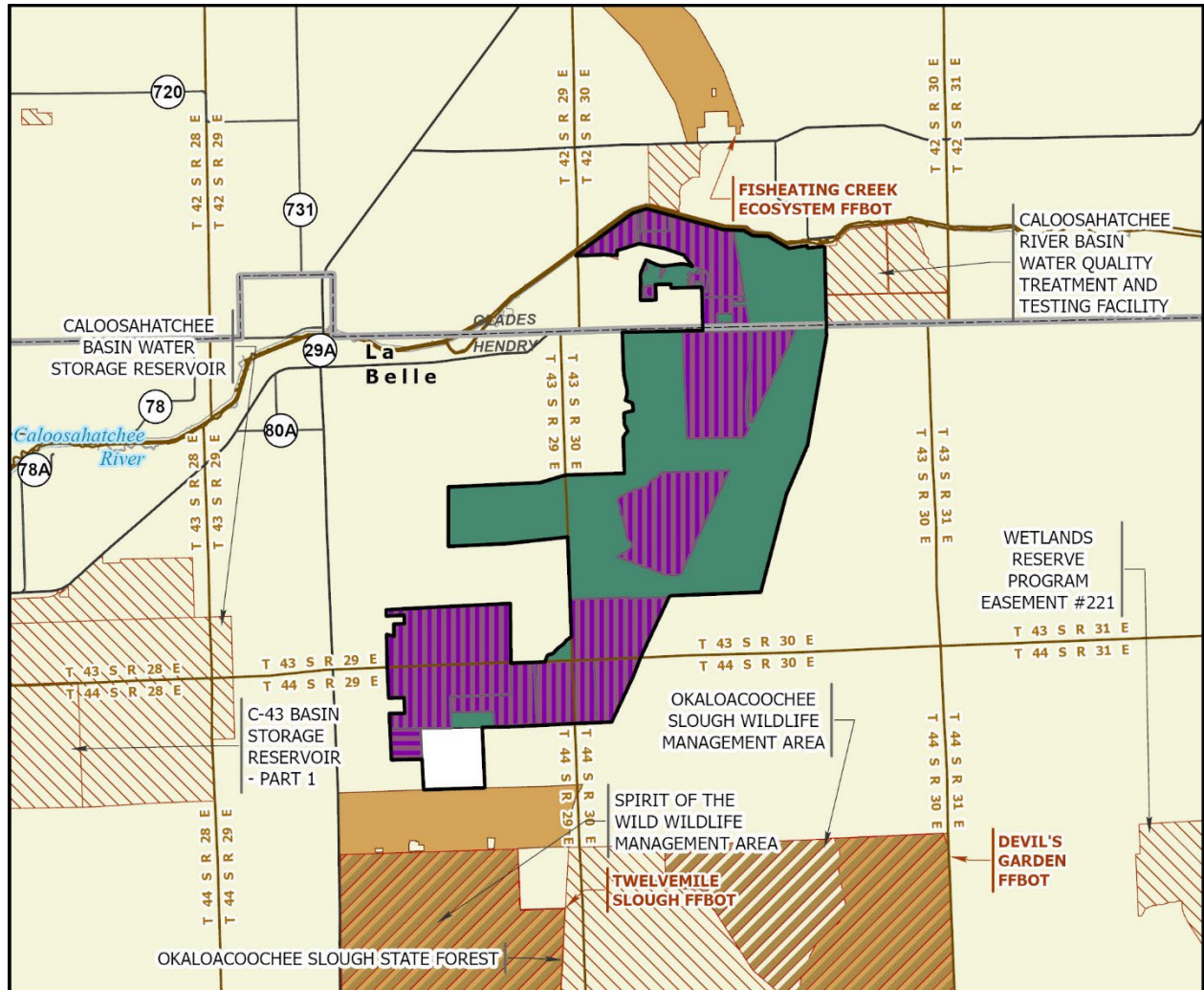
Revenue-generating potential

This property has historically provided timber and cattle production. Potential revenue sources may include hunting, fishing, ecotourism, cattle grazing, and sustainable timber production.

Cooperators in management activities

FWC will cooperate with other federal, state and local governmental agencies and non-profit organizations in managing the area. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presently maintains a campground and the locks at Ortona, along the northeastern corner of the Caloosahatchee Ecoscape project boundary.

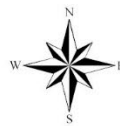
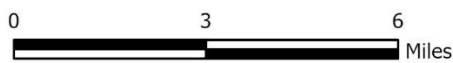




CALOOSAHATCHEE ECOSCAPE

GLADES AND HENDRY COUNTIES

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Acquired for Conservation (Less-Than-Fee)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects



FEBRUARY 2022

Map 1: FNAI, February 2022

