

# Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Charlotte, Lee

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1992
<i>Project Acres</i>	23,652
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	16,866
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$37,900,779
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	6,786
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$22,720,071

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project will protect an area with the largest and highest quality slash-pine flatwoods left in southwest Florida. The project will protect these flatwoods and connect the Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Preserve with the Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area, thus supporting management of these areas and the waters of the Aquatic Preserve.

## General Description

This project encompasses the largest remaining tract of intact pine flatwoods in southwestern Florida. Old-growth South Florida slash pine forests on site are home to at least ten rare animals including red-cockaded woodpeckers, bald eagles, and Florida panthers. The tract also provides important habitat for several rare plants, most notably a globally critically imperiled plant - the beautiful pawpaw, *Deeringothamnus pulchellus*. The project provides additional protection for the Outstanding Florida Waters of the Gasparilla Sound-Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve and will connect the Charlotte Harbor State Buffer Preserve and the Babcock-Webb WMA. This upland site is particularly suited for development, especially considering the rapid growth of Charlotte and Lee counties. No archaeological sites are known from the project.

### FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Red-cockaded woodpecker	G3/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Florida panther	G5T1/S1
<i>beautiful pawpaw</i>	G2/S2
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Florida kingsnake	G2/S2
<i>giant orchid</i>	G2G3/S2
<i>Florida beargrass</i>	G3/S3
Wood stork	G4/S2
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3

#### Public Use

The project is designated as a WMA, with such uses as hiking, environmental education and hunting.

#### Acquisition Planning

##### **Phase I**

Phase I tracts include Ansin (essential —acquired), Zemel (essential—Phase I acquired), Bower (essential), Section 20 SE of Burnt Store Marina Road and Section 24.

##### **1998**

On October 15, 1998, the LAMAC removed 165 acres from the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods and added it to the Charlotte Harbor Estuary project (then called Charlotte Harbor) as part of a 490-acre increase of that project.

##### **1999**

On February 11, 1999, the LAMAC added 333 acres, and on October 21, 1999, added 1,793 acres as essential parcels. In June 2007 the 9-acre Honenberg Parcel was purchased by FWCC and added to the Yucca Pens Unit of the project.

Large essential parcels have been acquired.

##### **2009**

On February 26, 2009 FWC purchased 37.63 acres (Yucca Pens) for \$298,000 from Allcoat, Inc. to add to Babcock Webb WMA. On June 12, 2009, the ARC approved removal of 3,035 acres (2,352 of ZREV-owner's request-plus 683 isolated / disturbed acres) from the boundary with a tax assessed value of \$43,524,121.

##### **2011**

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



**2015**

On August 15, 2015, the ARC approved adding Bond Ranch to the project. This increased the boundary by 670 acres and was added to help restore sheet-flow conditions in south Charlotte County.

**2016**

At the December 15th and 16th 2016, the ARC meeting, the members approved the 557-acre Hog Branch/Bear Branch proposal as a new Florida Forever project with a tax assessed value of \$837,602. This area is east of Burnt Store Road in Charlotte County. This is part of an effort to restore traditional sheet flow of water in Charlotte County that was disrupted over the years by the roadbeds for railroads and highways, which flooded areas in adjoining Lee County and degraded the tidal creeks that are important to snook, redfish and tarpon. After approving this for Florida Forever, the ARC then added these lands to the boundary of Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods.

**2019**

On April 19, 2019, the ARC approved adding the 2,752-acre (GIS) Stolle Ranch project proposed for fee simple acquisition in Charlotte and Lee counties to the 2020 Florida Forever Priority List, then moved to incorporate the lands within the Stolle Ranch project boundary into the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project boundary. The proposal had a 2019 tax assessed value of \$6,954,550. The proposal connects two managed areas. Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area is contiguous with the north and northwest boundaries of the property, and Prairie Pines Preserve is located immediately southwest of the I-75 corridor contributing to both connectivity as well as enhancing wildlife habitat.

On June 14, 2019, the ARC approved the addition of a 142-acre to the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Florida Forever project located in Charlotte County with a 2019 tax assessed value of \$593,013. This amendment was called the Charlotte 580 amendment and proposed to be acquired in fee simple. It will provide water to the Yucca Pens area. The land within the approved boundary was designated essential. It would be managed by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission if acquired.

**2020**

In 2020, six parcels [Kaiser, Spreen (1 parcel each); Willden, Slagle (2 parcels each)] within the Yucca Pens Unit were acquired containing 338.42 acres at a cost of \$652,500.00. The parcels will be managed by FWC as part of the Fred C. Babcock-Cecil M. Webb WMA. In March 2020, FWC acquired with Florida Forever funds, a 5-acre parcel from Bear Investments, LLC at a cost of \$13,400 that will be managed as part of Fred C. Babcock-Cecil M. Webb WMA.

**2021**

DEP acquired in fee simple 205.24 acres within the Yucca Pens Unit from Jefferson Parnell. The property will be managed by FWC as part of the Fred C. Babcock-Cecil M. Webb WMA.

**Coordination**

FWC is acquiring small inholdings in the project.



### **Management Policy Statement**

The primary goals of management of the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project are: to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs can adequately protect; and to provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural-resource-based recreation.

### **Manager(s)**

FWC

### **Management Prospectus**

#### **Qualifications for state designation**

The Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project meets the qualifications of a wildlife management area, because of the project's size (more than 18,000 acres), location (adjacent to the Babcock-Webb WMA), outstanding wildlife habitat (the largest stand of undisturbed flatwoods in southwest Florida) and wildlife resources (red-cockaded woodpeckers, Florida panthers, and Florida black bears, among others).

#### **Conditions affecting intensity of management**

Development surrounding and within the project, and the intense urbanization of southwest Florida, suggest a broad array of management problems. Trash dumping, other illegal trespass and the presence of numerous inholdings will certainly increase the need for intensive and careful management. Law enforcement and fire control issues are expected to be at the forefront.

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

The first year of management activity will entail controlling public access with gates and/or fencing and controlling the littering and dumping problems. Additional emphasis will be placed on planning and on establishing an adequate and appropriate fire regime. Subsequent years should result in this project becoming an integral part of the management scheme for Babcock-Webb WMA.

#### **Revenue-generating potential**

Though this property contains significant timber resources, the timber revenue potential is low. There is little or no market for South Florida Slash Pine timber in Southwest Florida (in fact, very little timber market at all). Nevertheless, the potential for generating recreational revenue is significant, if new recreational user fees were to be implemented on this WMA.

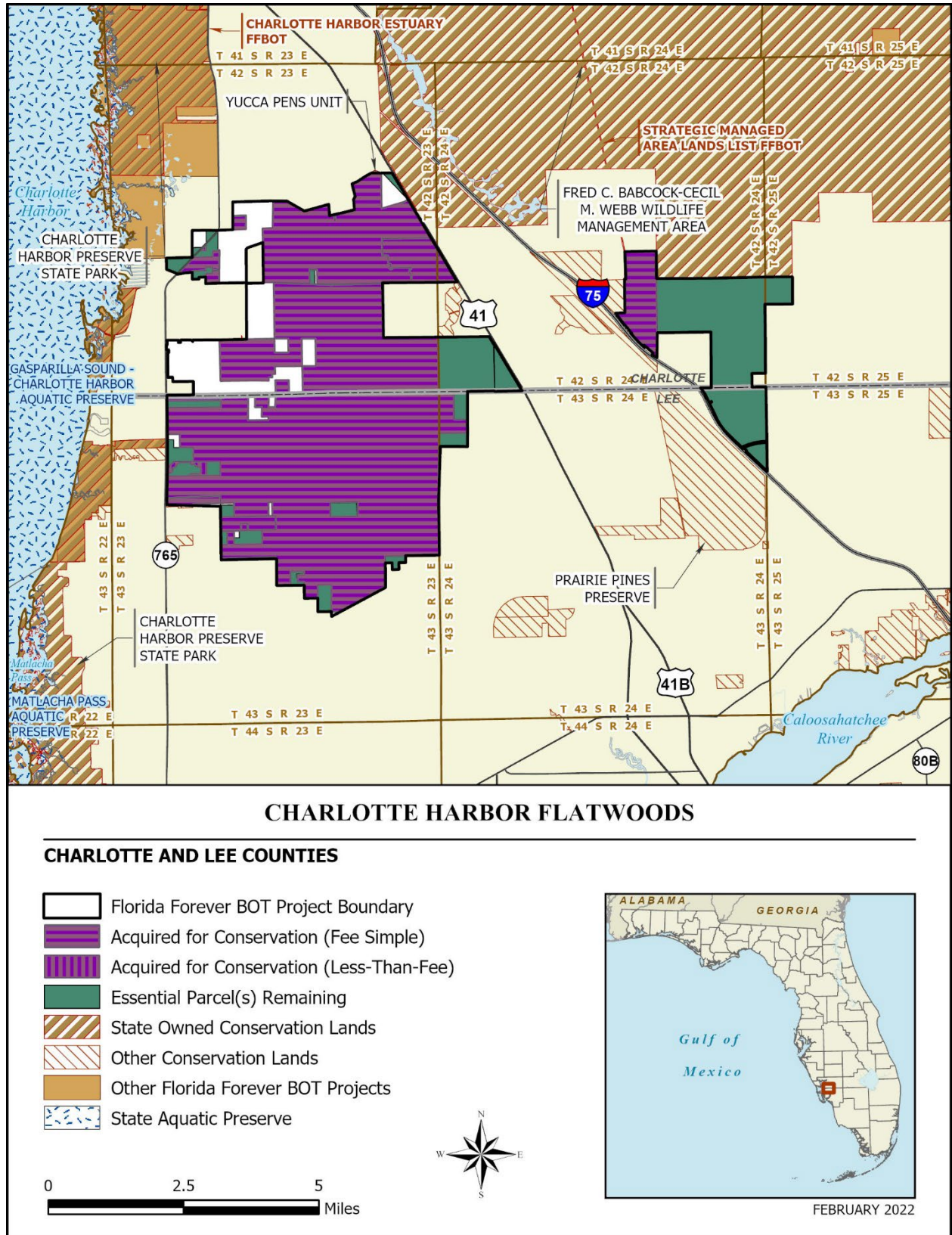


Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>CARL 1996/1997</u>	<u>CARL 1997/1998</u>
Salary	\$54,200	\$54,200
OPS	\$0	\$0
Expense	\$10,000	\$10,000
OCO	\$0	\$0
FCO	\$0	\$0

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





Map 1: FNAI, February 2022