

Conlin Lake X

Less-Than-Fee

Osceola

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2015
<i>Project Acres</i>	9,075
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	5,552
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	3,522
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$17,396,555

Purpose for State Acquisition

About nine miles east of the City of St. Cloud is the Conlin Lake X (CLX) property, completely surrounding a 1,000-plus-acre-lake formerly used by Mercury Marine for developing and testing motorboats. The land has a well-maintained 2,215-acre basin swamp and a large freshwater lake. This project will increase the protection of Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community, and landscape levels. The project will support state water quality and quantity by preserving the natural functions of the land, surface waters, and wetlands associated with CLX. This project meets the Florida Forever goals of increasing natural resource-based public recreation opportunities and the amount of open space available in urban areas.

General Description

The CLX site encompasses the entirety of Lake Conlin, a meandered, sovereign lake owned by the State of Florida. It is bordered by Deseret Ranch on the north and east, Birchwood Acres Limited Partnership on the south, and Bay Lake Ranch Subdivision to the west. Important nearby conservation areas include the Lake Lizzie Conservation Area a couple of miles to the west, the Triple N Ranch and Herky Huffman/Bull Creek WMA five miles to the southeast, and the Three Lakes WMA 15 miles to the south. The Big Bend Swamp/Holopaw Ranch Florida Forever Project abuts the southern boundary of the CLX, and the Osceola Pines Florida Forever Project is seven miles to the south. The CLX property is a high-quality landscape, a well-managed mosaic of uplands and wetlands surrounding the large mostly undeveloped Lake Conlin. The proposal is dominated by large cypress swamps, intermixed with mesic pine flatwoods (including scrubby and wet flatwoods) dotted with smaller dome swamps and depression marshes (see table below). The property surrounds Lake Conlin and is bisected by a 2,215-acre basin swamp that serves as the eastern floodplain of the lake. The lake border is undeveloped except for a small area of pasture and facilities on its southwestern side. Lake Conlin is reported to be in good health in regard to water quality and natural biota.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Southeastern fox squirrel	G5T5/S3
Bird Rookery	G5/SNRB

Public Use

Conlin Lake X is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. However, the manager currently provides natural resource education classes to the school children of Osceola County schools and week-long camp opportunities for at-risk children during the summer. These activities are expected to continue if this property is acquired by less-than-fee.

Acquisition Planning

2014

In December 2014, the CLX proposal was submitted to DSL. Testimony favoring the project was brought to the ARC in February 2015, and the ARC staff and members visited this and other proposed sites March 30th through April 2nd of 2015.

2015

On June 19th of 2015, the ARC voted 7-0 (with two abstentions and one absence) to add this property to the Florida Forever Priority List in the Less-than- Fee category. The owner is anticipating selling an easement on this parcel as one transaction. The entire acreage would be designated as essential. In 2015, the project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$33,907,500.

Coordination

There are no acquisition partners at this time.

Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the Conlin Lake X project would be managed for conservation purposes by the landowners as outlined in the conservation easement.

Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of Conlin Lake X would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm continued compliance with the conditions of the conservation easement would be coordinated by OES.

Management Prospectus

OES will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner.



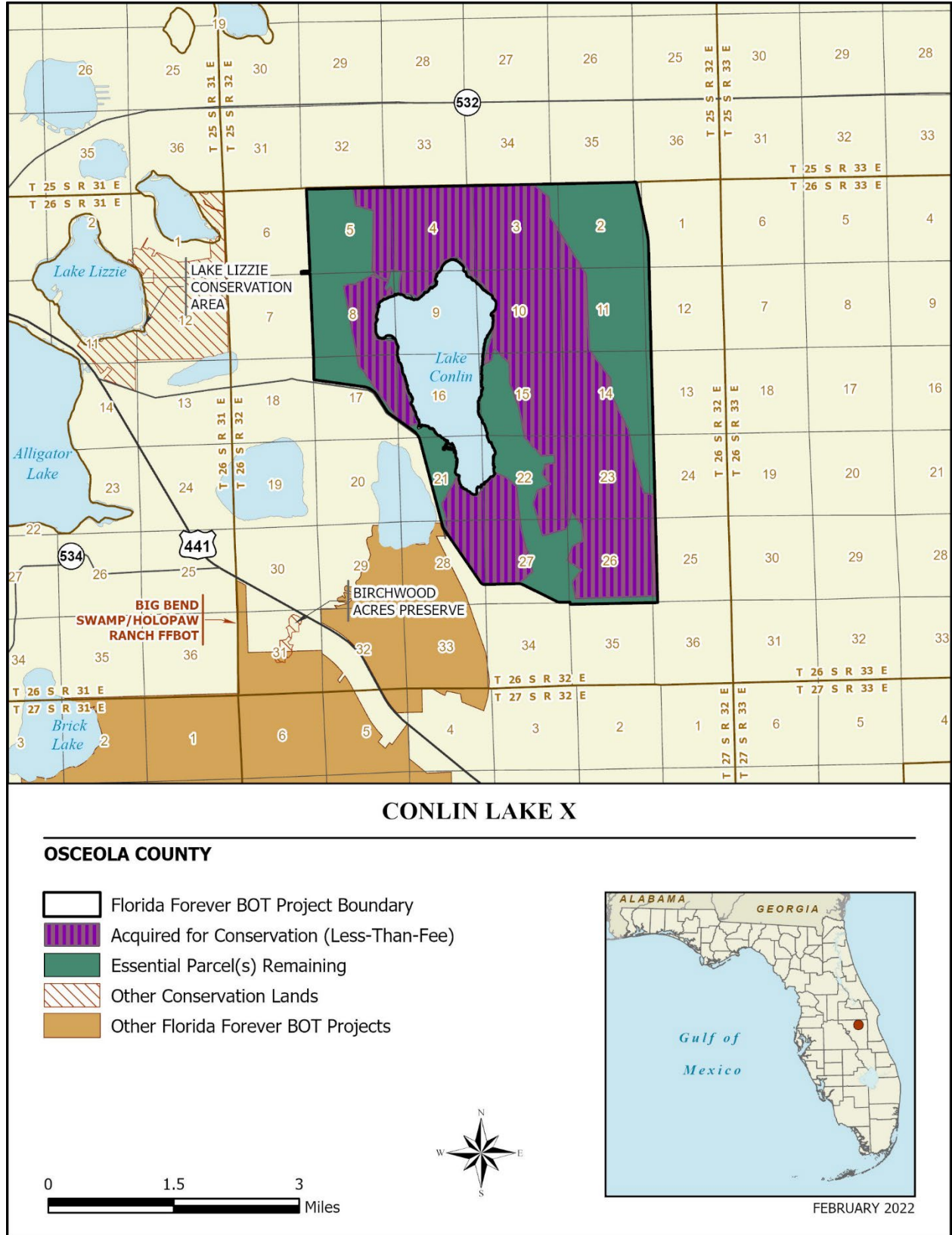
Qualifications for state designation

Protection of Lake Conlin and its surrounding basin swamps, mesic flatwoods and wet flatwoods would, according to FWC, contribute to the goals of protecting imperiled and common fish, and possibly forming a landscape connection to the nearby Big Bend Swamp and Holopaw Ranch conservation project, if the latter is acquired. Species documented on the site include the sandhill crane, bald eagle, Sherman's fox squirrel, and Bachmann's sparrow. Another Florida Forever goal is protection of natural floodplains, and 83 percent of the project meets this function. Some 99 percent of the project meets Florida Forever goals of protecting the surface waters of the state, and an analysis of the site shows that the entire site contributes to groundwater recharge for the aquifer.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Due to a long history of no cattle grazing, limited public use, and an ecological focus of land management, the field review showed that most of the natural communities on the Conlin Lake X proposal are in good to outstanding condition. The frequent prescribed fire (two-year rotation) with a focus on growing season burns has resulted in a healthy and vibrant herbaceous layer and the property is often used as a site for native seed collection. Invasive plants were found to be under control on this property.





Map 1: FNAI, February 2022