

# Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Collier, Lee

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1991</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>70,694</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>39,506</i>
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	<i>\$94,659,111</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>31,188</i>
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$470,980,058</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) project will create conservation connections between the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Preserve, and the National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. The project will provide critical habitat protection for rare wildlife such as the Florida panther and black bear as well as bird species including the swallow-tailed kite, wood stork, snowy egret, and bald eagle. The project will protect the flow of water feeding the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand, and other areas.

## General Description

The project, which mostly consists of excellent examples of cypress swamps and marshes, will connect the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve with the National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, thereby securing important habitat for the Florida panther and Florida black bear. These large expanses of wetlands are believed to be important to the survival of these critically imperiled species. The project supports at least two species of rare and endangered orchids and includes an unusual stand of dwarf bald cypress. No archaeological sites are recorded from the project. Upland areas are vulnerable to agricultural and residential development.

### FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Florida panther	G5T1/S1
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
<i>clamshell orchid</i>	G4G5/S2
Wood stork	G4/S2
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Snowy egret	G5/S3
Yellow-crowned night-heron	G5/S3
Little blue heron	G5/S4
Tricolored heron	G5/S4

#### Public Use

This project is designated as a WEA, with such uses as hiking, camping and environmental education.

#### Acquisition Planning

##### **1990**

On December 7, 1990, the LAAC added the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) project to the CARL Priority list. This project, sponsored by SFWMD, consists of some 18,205 acres, 73 landowners, and a taxable value of \$23,704,330. The entire project in both Lee and Collier counties contains approximately 49,810 acres, however, the initial focus of land acquisition is on the Camp Keis Strand Corridor (18,205 acres).

The Collier family is the largest landowner in the Strand. If fee-simple acquisition is not negotiable, then conservation easements or other less-than-fee acquisition techniques will be pursued.

##### **1992**

On November 20, 1992, the LAAC amended the project design to allow matching funds anywhere within the project for “new” acquisitions (acquired after November 20, 1992) by its partners Lee County and SFWMD.

On September 20, 1993, the LAAC approved a 3,182- acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by SFWMD, consisted of 4 tracts and multiple landowners, and a taxable value of \$8,636,331. The original amendment was for 4,022 acres, however 840 acres of 1 tract were already in the current boundary.

##### **1995**

On October 30, 1995, the LAAC approved a 612-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the SFWMD and had a taxable value of \$891,403. The original amendment was for 1,132 acres; however, 520 acres were already in the current boundary.



**1996**

On December 5, 1996, the LAAC approved a 3,040-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by SFWMD, consisted of 2 sites, and a taxable value of \$9,029,712. The original amendment was for four sites and 4,040 acres, however only sites three (excluding the south half of section 35) and four were approved.

**1999**

On December 9, 1999, the LAMAC approved a 2,560-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by SFWMD and the CREW Trust, consisted of 353 parcels, 260 landowners, and a taxable value of \$10,500,000. The parcels were designated as essential.

**2002**

On June 6, 2002, the ARC approved a 424-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by SFWMD, consisted of 147 parcels and multiple landowners, and a taxable value of \$2,570,240.

**2009**

In February 2009, Collier County bought 2,499 acres known as Pepper Ranch for \$32,525,080; in October 2009, Lee County bought approximately 15 acres/\$136,500 from their 20/20 program; and SFWMD donated 10 acres to FWC in the same month. The following lands were bought by SFWMD:

- 1) June 2009 and November 2009 (58 GIS acres/\$661,250);
- 2) three easement tracts (15) were donated by Bonita Springs Utility Co.;
- 3) November 2010 (191 acres/\$3,828,890);
- 4) December 2010 (5 acres/\$75,000).

**2011**

On December 9, 2011, the ARC added this project to the Florida Forever list in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

**2013**

On February 15, 2013, the ARC agreed to remove 77 acres from the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed in Lee and Collier counties because development has already disturbed the property.

**2016**

At the December 2016 ARC meeting, the members voted to add the CREW Headwaters proposal to the existing Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed project as an amendment. This adds 2,841 acres to CREW in the southeastern corner of Lee County in a plan to use willing sellers of groves to make hydrologic fixes to drainage areas that affected downstream areas. The goals for the addition included conserving fresh water that has run off into other areas, restoring water levels of the Corkscrew Swamp, improving habitat for such species as the Florida panther and the wood stork, and creating public recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities. FDOT is coordinating with SFWMD staff to possibly use this area as mitigation for the widening of State Road 82.

### Coordination

Acquisition partners are SFWMD, Lee and Collier Counties. Both TNC and TPL have been intermediaries in the acquisition of some tracts. Resolutions in support of this project include a pledge from Lee County for \$1.5 million.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the CREW project are to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; and to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect.

### Manager(s)

SFWMD

### Management Prospectus

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

The project's size, natural communities, and extremely sensitive wildlife resources qualify it as a wildlife and environmental area.

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

There are various intensities of management required for lands in CREW. There are low-need parcels such as virgin stands of cypress that require little or no management. Also, within CREW are moderate-need tracts that need basic resource management such as prescribed burning, and high-need tracts that have been completely altered. Severely altered tracts, such as agricultural fields, must be ecologically restored.

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

The initial land management plan was implemented in February 1991. Planning and operational activities are ongoing. Public use guidelines, including public access, have been established and are constantly being revised.

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

No revenue is expected to be generated for at least the next two and one-half years. At that time recommendations by FWC may lead to activities such as hunting that will generate revenue through permit and license fees. No other revenue-producing practices are envisioned at this stage of the management program.

#### **Cooperators in management activities**

A cooperative management agreement with the FWC was executed September 6, 1994. The project now receives regular inspections by SFWMD staff and law enforcement patrol by FWC Reserve program.



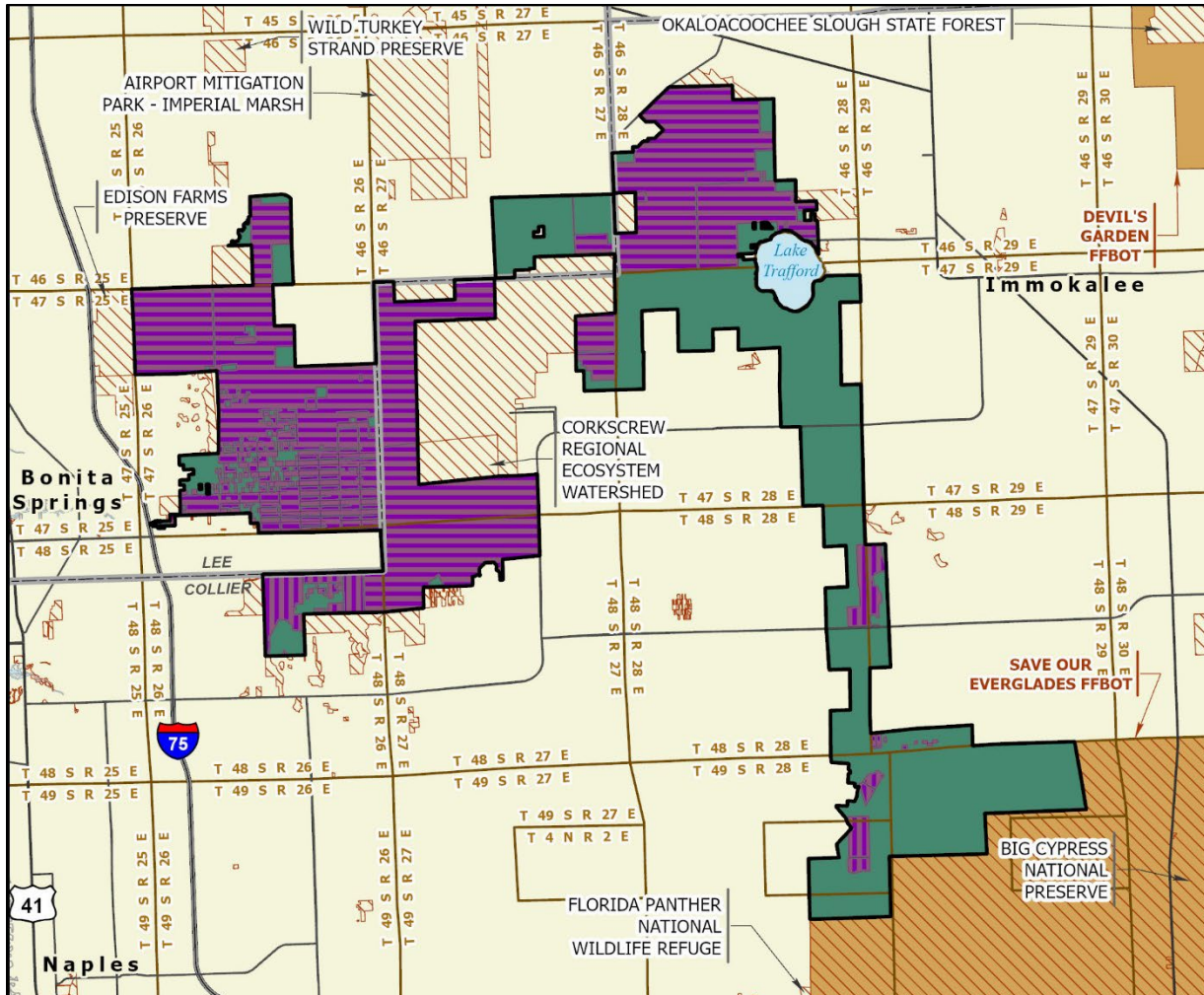
Under the agreement, FWC will enforce all laws, rules and regulations applicable to the management of CREW. Additional lands acquired will be given the same protection.

Management Cost Summary

SFWMD	1996/97	1997/98
Source of Funds	WMLTF	WMLTF
Salary	\$107,238	\$117,961
OPS	\$35,000	\$38,500
Expense	\$197,250	\$216,915
OCO	\$0	\$28,000
FCO	\$0	N/A
TOTAL	\$339,448	\$401,436

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted

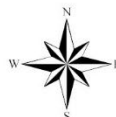
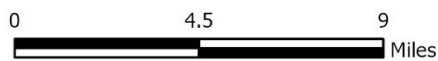




### CORKSCREW REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM WATERSHED

#### COLLIER AND LEE COUNTIES

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



FEBRUARY 2022

Map 1: FNAI, February 2022

