

Coupon Bight/Key Deer

Climate Change Lands

Monroe

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1985
<i>Project Acres</i>	3,102
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	1,945
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$30,605,927
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	1,157
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$69,625,605

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Coupon Bight/Key Deer project will protect the subtropical pine forests of rapidly developing Big Pine Key and surrounding islands that provide habitat for the endangered Key deer and many Caribbean plants found nowhere else in the country. The project will protect the remaining undeveloped land on Big Pine and No Name Keys (critical for the survival of the Key deer) in order to provide a critical buffer for the National Key Deer Refuge. Rich coral reefs and other hardbottom communities flourish in shallow water around the islands. The project will protect the water quality of the Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve and provide the public an opportunity to appreciate the unique natural world in this part of Florida.

General Description

The project is within the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern and encompasses virtually all the undeveloped land between the Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve and the National Key Deer Refuge on Big Pine Key and No Name Key. It includes the only significant sources of fresh water in the lower keys, which are critical to the survival of the endangered Key deer. The pine rocklands and associated communities in this project area are the largest and most well-preserved remaining worldwide. At least 36 rare plant species, of which 28 are state listed as endangered or threatened, are known to occur within the project. Several of these species will most likely go extinct if this area is developed for residential uses. At least 17 rare animal species, of which 4 are state listed as endangered or threatened, are known to occur within the project.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Key deer	G5T1/S1
Loggerhead sea turtle	G3/S3
<i>Cape Sable thoroughwort</i>	G1/S1
<i>tree cactus</i>	G1/S1
<i>wedge spurge</i>	G2T1/S1
Lower Keys marsh rabbit	G5T1/S1
Key ringneck snake	G5T1/S1
Striped mud turtle, Lower Keys population	G5T1Q/S1
<i>sand flax</i>	G1G2/S1S2
<i>devil's smooth-claw</i>	G1G3/S1
<i>lignum-vitae</i>	G2G3/S1
<i>fewflower holdback</i>	G2G4/S1

Public Use

This project is designated as a buffer preserve and a wildlife and environmental area to the National Key Deer Refuge. It will allow such uses as photography, nature appreciation, and hiking.

Acquisition Planning

Phases

Coupon Bight Phase I: The Strachley Tract (acquired by the FWS through the Trust for Public Lands), and the Brothers tract; Phase II: Developable uplands (a few larger acreage tracts have been acquired by the state—the Pepper and Papps tracts and some subdivision lots in Piney Point, Tropical Park, and Kinercha north of the bight); Phase III: jurisdictional wetlands. DSL further refined the priority acquisitions to large acreage tracts.

1995

On October 30, 1995, LAMAC added 11.38 acres to the project boundary.

2005

On February 11, 2005, ARC approved a +376-acre fee-simple addition to the project boundary, with a 2004 total assessed value of \$3,240,815.

2011

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

Acquisition activity is focusing on tracts providing a viable corridor between the Coupon Bight and Key Deer portions of the project. All the owners have received an offer.

2012

On April 20, 2012, ARC removed 271 acres (810 parcels) from the project that a staff review found were disturbed by development.



2020

In 2020, six parcels were acquired: Dmoch (1 parcel); Gouldy (1 parcel); George (1 parcel); and Hart (3 parcels), containing 0.93 acres at a cost of \$242,850.00. They will be managed by Monroe County.

2021

DEP acquired in fee simple 0.15 acres from the Estate of Sarah Gahm to be managed for conservation purposes by the Monroe County Land Authority.

Coordination

The SFWMD and FWS are acquisition partners for this site. TNC acted as intermediary in negotiation of 520 acres, expending approximately \$5,124,000 on behalf of the SFWMD and USFWS. The USFWS included this project as an addition to the NKDR.

The MCLA is also an acquisition partner on this project. MCLA has acquired 57 acres from January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2008 for approximately \$663,000.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the Coupon Bight/Key Deer project are to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area; to conserve and protect lands within areas of critical state concern; 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, in order 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)

The FWS will manage most of this project, however, the Monroe County Land Authority will be a cooperating manager for a small portion of the project.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation

The property will function as a buffer preserve to Coupon Bight Aquatic Preserve, the NKDR, and sovereign submerged lands.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Impediments to management are illegal dumping, vehicular trespass, and poaching. Regular patrols, cleanup efforts, posting of the property, and management presence would curtail these problems. The FWS land is open to the public but because of limited facilities, minimal resource management and protection would be needed.



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

Within the first year after acquisition, the area north of U.S. 1 would be posted in the same manner as existing National Key Deer Refuge lands and provided protection under Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations. FWS law enforcement officers would routinely patrol the area. Permitted activities would be limited to uses such as hiking, bird watching and photography. There would be no nighttime use, pets, camping, use of motorized vehicles, or collection of plants and animals. Regular patrols by preserve staff will assist in detection of potential encroachments and/or violations.

Long-range goals would include development of a detailed management plan for perpetuation and maintenance of natural communities. A prescribed burning plan would be formulated in pine rockland habitat; long-term monitoring and an active research program would be part of this program. An in-depth resource inventory would be carried out to identify and map sensitive areas that warrant special consideration and management. There will be no infrastructure development in natural areas; unnecessary roads will be abandoned or removed. Long-term management needs include exotic plant control and wetlands restoration. Public access will be allowed on a limited basis. Acquisition has been primarily directed at unimproved properties. If the preserve acquires improved property, efforts would be made to use it for offices, education facilities and/or workshop and storage space.

Revenue-generating potential

Given the sensitivity of the natural resources of the preserve, large-scale use by the public is not recommended. Low impact recreational and/or private commercial activities, such as canoe/kayak concessions, wildlife photography/filming may potentially generate some revenue.

Cooperators in management activities

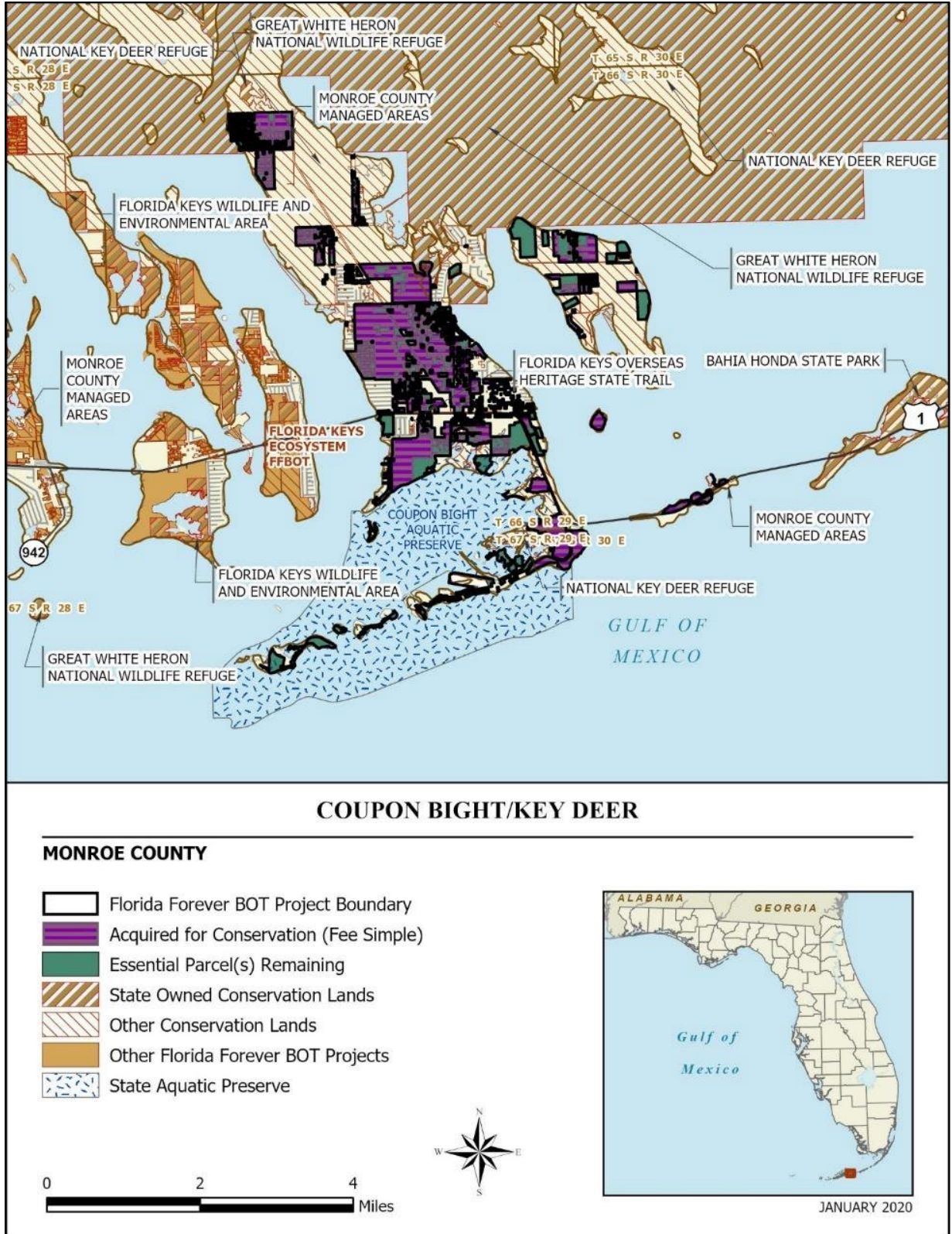
Security of the project area will depend upon the assistance and cooperation of state and local law enforcement.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FWS, NKDR, and the MCL</u>	<u>2000/2001</u>	<u>2001/2002</u>
Salary	Not provided	Not provided
OPS	Not provided	Not provided
Expense	\$12,048	\$21,000
OCO	Not provided	Not provided
Special Category	\$1,445	Not provided
FCO	Not provided	Not provided
Grant	Not provided	Not provided
TOTAL	\$13,493	\$21,000

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





Map 1: FNAI, January 2020