

# Eastern Scarp Ranchlands

Less-Than-Fee

Highlands

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2013
<i>Project Acres</i>	2,214
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	2,214
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$1,364,815

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Eastern Scarp Ranchlands project will the Avon Park Air Force Range against encroachment and changing land uses. The project will support state water quality and quantity by preserving floodplains and strategic area for the Kissimmee River and Lake Istokpoga.

## General Description

The Eastern Scarp Ranchlands (ESR) project in Highlands County was proposed by TNC as a less-than-fee acquisition. The project has three parcels that can be accessed from Scrubpens Road, part of which is a county-maintained road. The ESR project name is taken from its unique geology. It spans a slope that descends 50 feet in elevation over the course of two miles. The western side of the property occupies part of the southern tip of Bombing Range Ridge, a narrow sand ridge of Pleistocene origin. On this ridge, which reaches an elevation of about 95 feet above sea level on the proposal, soils are moderately well-drained. A broad slope, about 300 meters wide going from west to east, descends from the ridge. From this point eastward, the plain begins a very gradual descent, eventually dropping to an elevation of about 50 feet along the edge of the Kissimmee floodplain.

The ESR is adjacent to the Avon Park Air Force Range (APAFR), which forms the northern boundary of the site. Floodplain lands adjacent the east side of the proposal are managed by the SFWMD. Northeast of the property on the other side of the Kissimmee River is Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park. The ESR is a working ranch, almost 80 percent converted to improved Bahia grass- dominated pasture. Most of the pasture occupies former dry prairie that once stretched unbroken from the cutthroat seep located in the western portion of the property to the Kissimmee River floodplain that forms the eastern boundary of the site. The pasture is dotted with numerous depression marshes, many of which have been dug to form watering holes for cattle or drained via a network of ditches. The largest remaining natural community is a zone of wet prairie-cutthroat grass seep (164 acres) on the eastern slope of the Bombing Range Ridge.

### FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
White ibis	G5/S4

#### Public Use

Eastern Scarp Ranchlands is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. The project is potentially significant as a military buffer area and as an addition to an existing mosaic of other fee and less-than-fee conservation lands within the Kissimmee River watershed.

#### Acquisition Planning

The parcel would most likely be acquired in one purchase, as a single conservation easement, and therefore the entire parcel would be designated as essential.

#### **2013**

On December 13, 2013, the ARC voted to add the Eastern Scarp Ranchlands to the Less-Than-Fee category list of Florida Forever projects. At the time, the project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$938,262.

#### Coordination

TNC has been working with the DOD and the County and has secured 1,382 acres in this region contiguous with APAFR. TNC confirmed in late 2013 that an application has been submitted for additional (REPI) funding to match with Florida Forever funding to acquire this proposal.

#### Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the ESR project would be managed for conservation purposes by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.

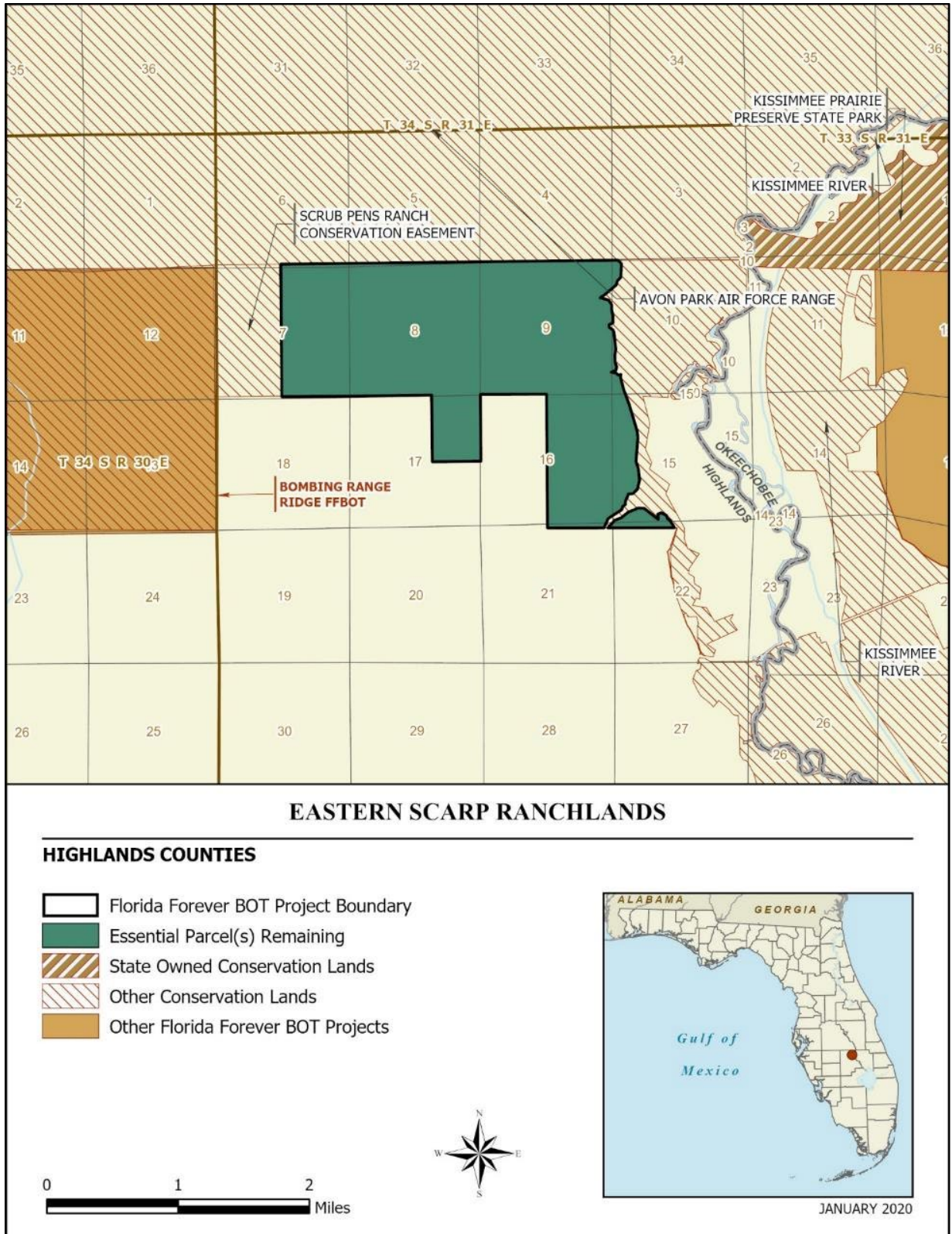
#### Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of Eastern Scarp Ranchlands 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 with OES.

#### Management Prospectus

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





Map 1: FNAI, January 2020