

Econfina Timberlands

Critical Natural Lands

Jefferson

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2019
<i>Project Acres</i>	1,665
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	1,665
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$2,083,352

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Econfina Timberlands project will advance protection of a landscape corridor along the Aucilla River that extend north from the Gulf Coast to the Georgia border through a series of existing public and private conservation lands. The project will protect the water resources of this area, including the Aucilla River, Beasley Creek and Raysor Creek and important habitat for the Florida black bear the swallow-tailed kite and the Cooper's hawk.

General Description

Econfina Timberlands is in eastern Jefferson County. The project has two parcels that touch the SRWMD-managed Middle Aucilla Conservation Area and privately managed Turkey Scratch Conservation Easement. The project area is currently managed by Econfina Timberlands, LLC of Fernandina Beach, Florida.

The Econfina Timberlands project is in the Gulf Coastal Lowlands, situated between the Tallahassee hills and the coastal swamps. FWC's GIS analysis of the area shows that about 42 percent of this area is (loblolly) tree plantation, 28 percent is freshwater forested wetlands and 6.8 percent is marshes. The remaining land is small percentages of the total acreage, and includes floodplain swamp, dome swamp, cypress, and prairies and bogs. There are 13 distinct community natural types within the boundary. All of it is important habitat for the Florida black bear. There is no record found of Florida panthers in this area, but it is within the FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for the Cooper's hawk and the swallow-tailed kite.

Though silvicultural activities have altered the landscape, impacting native groundcover, perennial grasses such as wiregrass persist. With activities such as thinning and burning, plantations with intact native groundcover can be restored to the former natural community.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

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

Public Use

This property will be managed by FWC for recreational and wildlife conservation purposes.

Acquisition Planning

2019

On October 18, 2019, ARC added Econfina Timberlands, a 1,665 acre project, to the Florida Forever project list as a fee simple project. The project had a 2019 tax assessed value of \$2,368,711. The land within the approved boundary was designated essential. This project was sponsored by FWC.

Coordination

The southern boundaries of both parcels are shared with conservation easements and public conservation areas. The Aucilla WMA, managed by FWC, is located approximately ten miles southwest of Econfina Timberlands.

Management Policy Statement

Being near other important conservation lands, acquisition of Econfina Timberlands would significantly help with landscape connectivity and wildlife corridors.

Manager(s)

This property will be managed by FWC.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

This project will conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, and fish and wildlife resources. The project will conserve and protect significant landscape scale habitat and provide wildlife corridors for rare and imperiled species by adding to conserved WMAs and increasing linkages and conservation corridors between public lands and private conservation easements in the region. The project will provide surface and groundwater protection and protect natural floodplain function in Northwest Florida. The project will provide opportunities for fish and wildlife resource-based public outdoor recreation.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Resources described in this Management Prospectus indicate conditions affecting intensity of management. These include natural community types, topography and soils, surface and ground water conditions, extent of historic disturbance, and already existing improvements. Environmentally sensitive



areas, such as erosion-prone sites, important habitats, outstanding natural areas, and wetlands will be identified, appropriately managed, and protected.

The FWC conducts analysis of historic vegetation of natural community types when necessary to determine appropriate desired future conditions. Upland wildlife management concentrates on appropriate vegetative manipulations guided by the FWC's OBVM program, which includes the application of prescribed fire to achieve conditions acceptable to a broad range of wildlife species within the area's fire-adapted natural communities. Some areas may require ecological restoration of ground cover, control of invasive species, and either thinning or reforestation. Such resource management projects may be necessary to accomplish restoration objectives and to attain the desired future conditions for communities. This is especially important for conservation of habitats and populations of imperiled or rare species. Landscape ecology is also important, as land use changes in the vicinity of the area, such as intensive residential, commercial and industrial developments, and the roads that often accompany them, may also affect the attainment of resource conservation goals for the area and the effectiveness of necessary resource management projects.

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

If acquired and leased to FWC for management, an amendment to the existing Aucilla WMA Management Plan will include management goals and objectives necessary to implement future resource management programs on Econfina Timberlands. The management plan will also establish the current and future roles of cooperating entities including governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.

Long-range plans would stress ecosystem management and the protection and management of locally important, rare, and imperiled species. If acquired, historic analysis of natural communities and vegetation types may be conducted, if deemed necessary, and quantified vegetation management objectives will be developed. FWC would also assess the condition of wildlife resources and provide planning support to enhance management of locally important species and recovery of imperiled species in the area. Use of prescribed fire and other essential resource management activities will be implemented to maintain and restore natural communities and vegetation types to benefit native wildlife resources.

Programs providing multiple fish and wildlife-based public outdoor recreational uses will be considered for implementation following acquisition. These potential recreational uses will enhance the public's understanding of the region while providing ample opportunities for outdoor recreational enjoyment. Essential roads will be maintained to provide all weather public access and management operations. Unnecessary roads, fire lanes, and hydrological disturbances will be abandoned or restored as practical.

Infrastructure development will be limited to only that which is necessary to allow public access and to provide for the necessary facilities, security, and management of the property. Archaeological and historical sites will be managed in coordination with DHR



Revenue-generating potential

Revenue from this conservation land can include sales of various permits and recreational user fees and ecotourism activities, if such projects could be economically developed. Area regulations would be developed to identify the necessary and required permits, fees, and regulations. Timber sales from thinning operations or restoration of off-site plantations may also yield additional revenue. Apiary leases will be considered as a revenue source depending on whether the area meets the criteria of FWC’s Apiary Policy. In addition, the Florida Legislature appropriates funds for land management. The long-term values of ecosystem services to local and regional land and water resources, and to human health, are expected to be significant.

Cooperators in management activities

FWC will cooperate with other federal, state, and local governmental agencies including FFS, DEP, SRWMD, Jefferson and Madison counties, and other private conservation organizations in the continuing management of the property.

Management costs and sources of revenue

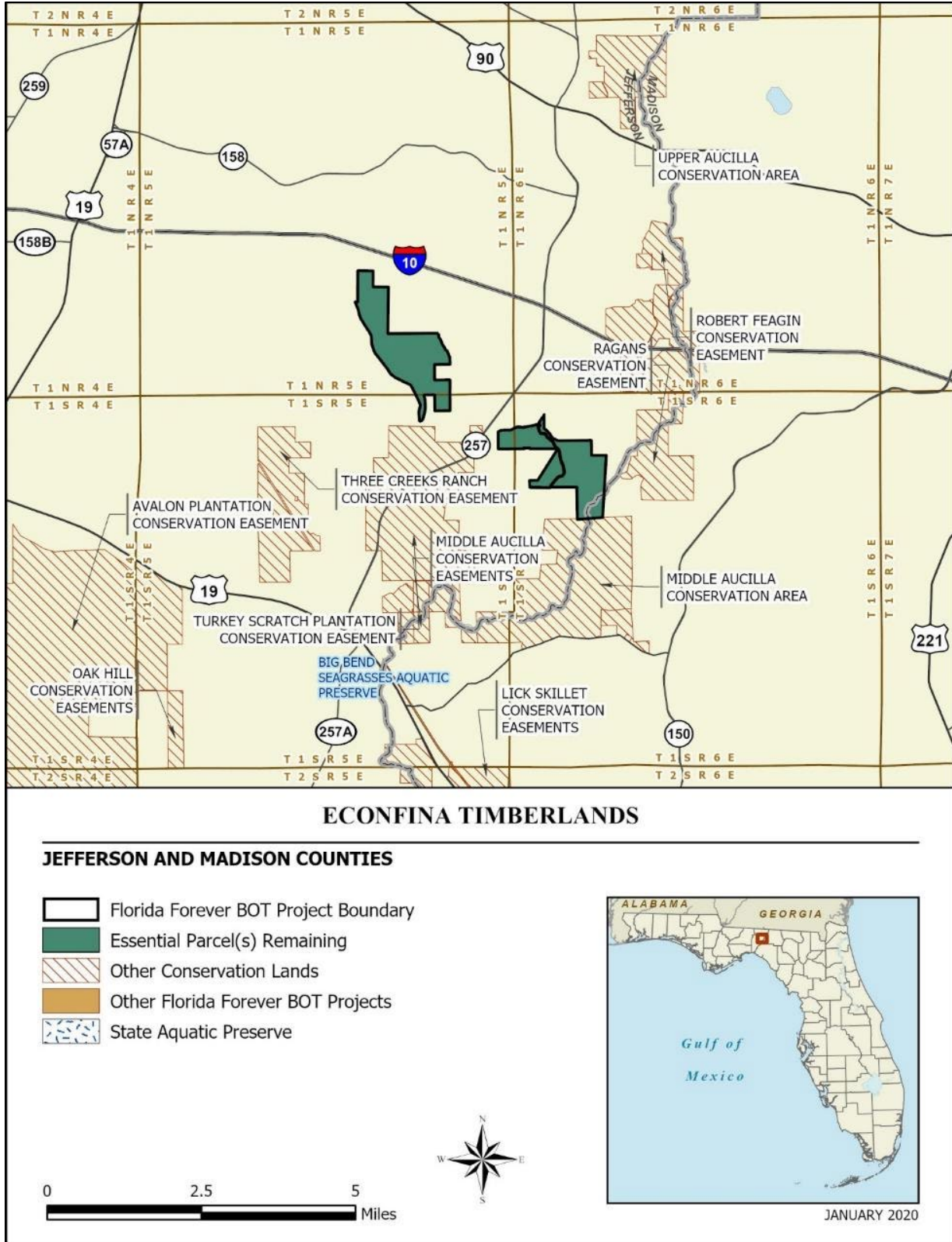
The initial non-recurring (first year only) start-up cost for the Econfina Timberlands is estimated to be \$266,400, which includes public access and infrastructure and fixed capital outlays necessary for management of the area. All land management funding is dependent upon annual legislative appropriations

Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>Recurring</u>	<u>Non-recurring</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Source of funds			State of Florida Visitor entrance fees and charges
Salary		\$27,114	for 1 FTE position
Expense	\$17,799		
OCO	\$63,636		
FCO	\$17,083	\$266,400	

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted in 2019





Map 1: FNAI, January 2020