

Gulf Hammock

Less-Than-Fee

Levy

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2004
<i>Project Acres</i>	25,611
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	25,611
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$54,292,172

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Gulf Hammock project is designed to protect a large forested system and watershed that drains into an aquatic preserve. Acquiring this project meets the Florida Forever goals of increasing biodiversity by protecting nesting habitats for swallow tailed kites and bald eagles. The project will support and rehabilitate natural functions of the land and water by restoring the hydrology that existed before silviculture operations. The project has the potential to increase natural resource-based public recreation by providing passive recreation, including picnicking, hiking trails, and nature appreciation and education.

General Description

The Gulf Hammock project is located in southwest Levy County. Approximately 3,652 acres of the project are proposed for full-fee sale. The remaining acres would be protected by a less-than-fee conservation easement. Approximately 23,248 acres of land within the project area are currently managed in cooperation with the FWC as Gulf Hammock WMA, the State's oldest wildlife management area, established in 1948.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Tampa vervain</i>	G2/S2
<i>variable-leaved Indian-plantain</i>	G2/S2
Eastern kingsnake	G5/S1S2
<i>wood spurge</i>	G5/S2
Little blue heron	G5/S4

Public Use

Management programs would conserve, protect, manage and/or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, wildlife populations, forests and water resources. The project area will be managed to provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping and hiking. The DEP and University of Florida Statewide Greenways System Planning Project shows three percent (716 acres) of the project area to be Priority 1 or 2 recreational trails.

The portion of Gulf Hammock proposed for less-than-fee acquisition does not provide for public access. However, hunting, nature appreciation, trails, and primitive camping might be considered the most prominent public uses of the area proposed for full fee purchase.

Acquisition Planning

2004

Of this project, 21,959 acres (eighty-six percent) is proposed for less-than-fee easement. The property is owned by Plum Creek Timber Company. Most of the property that is offered in less-than-fee is currently being used for intensive silvicultural production. The 3,652 acres that is being offered in fee is located at the west end of the property and is more hydrologically and environmentally intact, it would be an addition to, or buffer to the Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park. Council staff is continuing project development work with the major owner and with other landowners with significant natural resources to determine optimum boundaries and uses of the fee and less-than-fee portions of the project. In 2004, the project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$11,524,000.

On June 4, 2004, the ARC added this project to the B List of Florida Forever projects.

2011

On December 9, 2011, the ARC placed this project in the Less-Than-Fee category of Florida Forever projects.



Coordination

FWC should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies, including the FFS and DEP in management of the property.

Management Policy Statement

Since principal purposes of the project include protecting biodiversity and providing resource-based public recreation and education opportunities, programs would be oriented toward conserving and protecting wildlife species, and carefully controlling public use. Conserving and protecting environmentally unique native habitats and imperiled and rare species should be an important management goal for the project. Management programs would conserve, protect, manage and/or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, wildlife populations, forests and water resources. The project area will be managed to provide opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping and hiking.

The portion of Gulf Hammock proposed for less-than-fee acquisition would be managed for conservation purposed by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.

Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of Gulf Hammock 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. FWC is recommended as lead manager for the portion of the project that would be acquired in full fee (3,652 acres); located at the west end of the property, and being more intact both hydrologically and environmentally, it would be an addition to, or buffer for, the Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park. The FWC currently manages most of the project area as the Gulf Hammock WMA.

Management Prospectus

OES will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner. FWC submitted the following management plans for any full-fee purchases in this project:

Qualifications for state designation

The entire project area is a habitat conservation priority for rare species with the greatest conservation need, according to FNAI. The project also provides habitat for many focal species, which are indicators of natural communities, and suitable habitat conditions for other wildlife species. FWC indicates that 43 percent (11,105 acres) of the project area includes at least seven focal species. Focal species are those that are indicators of natural communities or suitable habitat conditions for many other species of wildlife. Many important conservation lands have become increasingly isolated and no longer support viable populations of large widely ranging mammals. The Gulf Hammock Florida Forever project would provide landscape connectivity that, if realized, should benefit fish and wildlife resources by linking large



areas of natural habitat, and by providing to the user community diverse outdoor recreational opportunities.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Some portions of the project include lands that are low-need tracts, requiring application of resource management methods, including the frequent use of prescribed fire where appropriate. Additional methods may be necessary for some management units in order to accomplish objectives for restoration to a desired future condition. FWC would conduct historic vegetation analysis to determine appropriate, desired future conditions; objectives; and restoration methods. This is especially important for conserving habitats and populations of imperiled or rare species. The primary methods for perpetuation of the less disturbed natural communities might involve, for example, reintroducing prescribed fire and control of human uses in certain management units. Surveillance for, and removal of infestations of exotic invasive plant species will be done. Biotic surveys would be important to accomplish during the early part of planned development and implementation, because imperiled or rare species are expected to occur on the project. Development of facilities, as on all wildlife management areas, would be kept to the minimum level necessary to assure a high-quality recreational experience, and any such development would be confined to areas of previous disturbance.

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

During the first year after acquisition, emphasis would be placed on site security, posting boundaries, public access, fire management, resource inventory and removal of refuse. A conceptual management plan would be developed by FWC describing the management goals and specific objectives necessary to implement future resource management. Long-range goals would emphasize ecosystem management and the conservation of fish and wildlife. Following completion of plant community inventory and historic vegetation analysis, quantified vegetation management objectives would be developed pursuant to FWC objective-based vegetation management process. Essential roads would be stabilized to provide all-weather public access and management operations. Programs providing multiple recreational uses would also be implemented. An all-season prescribed burning management plan would be developed and implemented using conventional and biologically acceptable methods. Growing season prescribed burning would be used where appropriate to best achieve management objectives. Management activities would strive to manage natural plant communities to benefit native wildlife resources. Where appropriate, practical and in pursuit of wildlife habitat objectives, these resources would be managed using acceptable silvicultural practices. Archaeological and historic sites would be managed in coordination with DHR. DHR lists two of these sites in the project area.

Environmentally sensitive areas, such as erosion-prone sites, important habitats, outstanding natural areas and wetlands, would be identified and appropriate protective measures would be implemented on those areas. Unnecessary roads, fire lanes and hydrological disturbances would be abandoned or restored as practical. Other existing infrastructure would be protected to the extent possible.



Infrastructure development would be the minimum required to allow public access, provide facilities for the public, and provide security and management of the project area.

Revenue-generating potential

Substantial revenue from forest products production, as currently occurs, should continue. Management would seek to improve the other revenue-generating potential in areas currently serving for forest products production by improving wildlife diversity and resource-based recreation in such areas.

Additional revenue would be generated from sales of hunting and fishing licenses, wildlife management area stamps and other special hunting stamps. Some revenues might be realized in the future from recreational user fees and ecotourism activities if such projects could be economically developed.

Cooperators in management activities

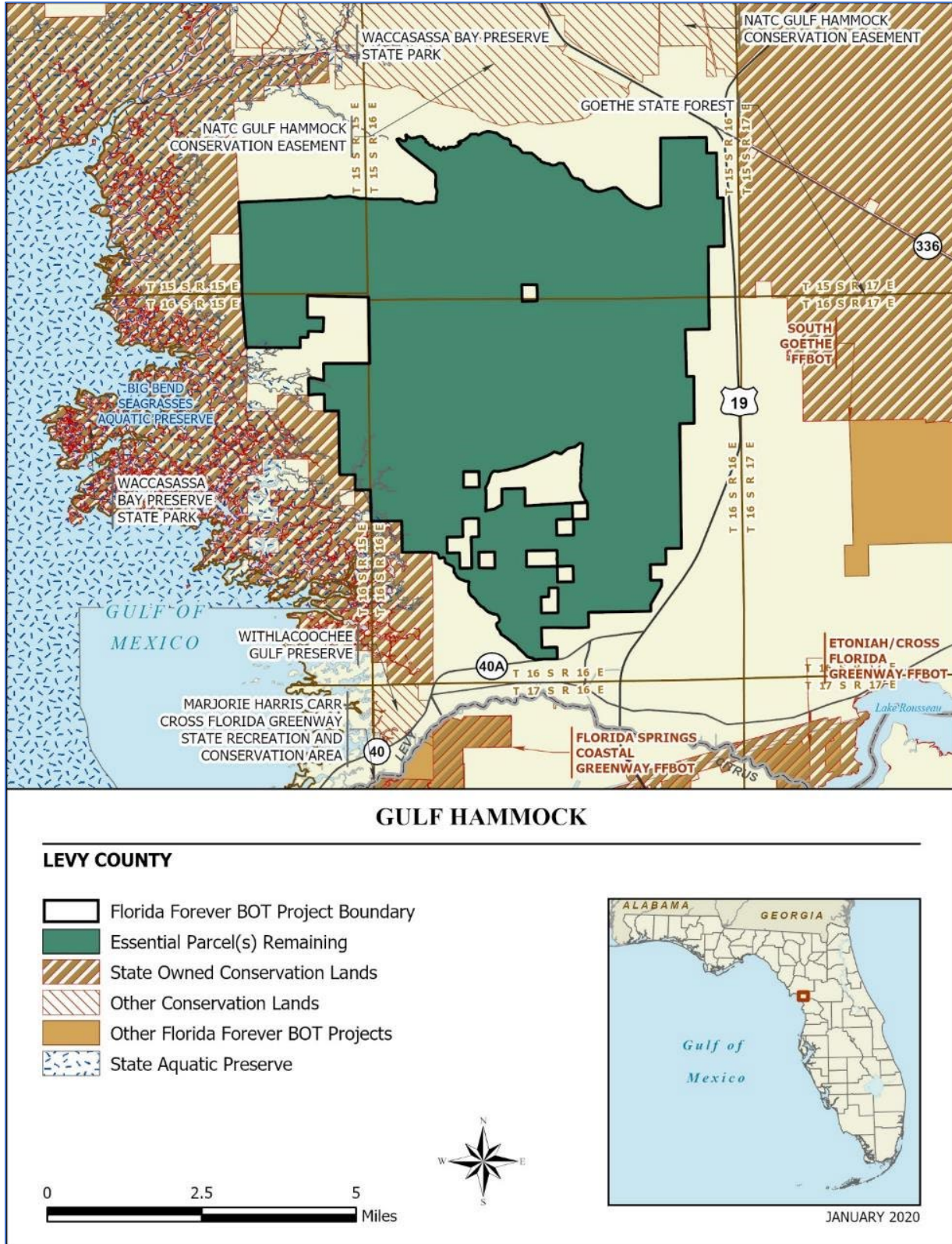
FWC should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies, including FFS and DEP in management of the property.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	State and/or federal	State and/or federal
Resource Management	\$91,369	\$72,532
Administration	\$ 75,494	\$ 25,133
Support	\$149,080	\$ 31,566
Capital Improvements	\$185,583	\$ 25,347
Visitor Services/Recreation	\$ 1,285	\$ 141
Law Enforcement	\$ 2,534	\$ 2,534
TOTAL	\$505,344	\$157,252

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





Map 1: FNAI, January 2020