

Lake Santa Fe

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Alachua, Bradford

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2004
<i>Project Acres</i>	10,529
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	1,653
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$2,219,016
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	8,876
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$30,641,745

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Lake Santa Fe project will provide protection to the only remaining shoreline of Lake Santa Fe that supports wading bird nesting and resting, natural shoreline fauna, historic cypress fringe, swamps, and mostly undisturbed wetlands. It will protect existing publicly owned wetlands and swamp systems by maintaining water quality and preventing additional development. Preserving additional lands will support the health and function of the Santa Fe Swamp and ensure adequate surface water resources and water quality. This project will assist with the completion of the Florida National Scenic Trail, a cross-Florida hiking and non-motorized trail designated by the U.S. Congress.

General Description

The Lake Santa Fe project includes 14 tracts in the Lake Santa Fe vicinity with a total of 10,379 acres. This project is proposed as fee simple, with possible use of less-than-fee on some parcels and would build upon SRWMD's Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area, which includes most of the Santa Fe Swamp and Lake Alto Swamp. It is designed to protect the surface headwaters of the swamps through prevention of further development and septic input, and to protect undeveloped portions of the Lake Santa Fe shoreline. The project is segmented by lakefront residential development, limiting the lake edge protection and recreational opportunities.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>narrowleaf naiad</i>	G3/S2
Wood stork	G4/S2
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Southeastern fox squirrel	G5T5/S3
Osprey	G5/S3S4

Public Use

Several of the parcels in the project qualify for passive recreational opportunities including picnicking, short trails and nature appreciation. One parcel may provide opportunity for more diverse (but passive) opportunities such as canoeing, fishing, and bird watching. All of the parcels in this proposed project boundary are for the most part in or near a medium priority multi-use trail corridor.

Acquisition Planning

2003

On December 5, 2003, the ARC added the Lake Santa Fe project to Group A of the Florida Forever 2004 Priority List. This fee-simple project, sponsored by the Lake Santa Fe Dwellers Association and TNC, consisted of approximately 10,574 acres, multiple owners, and a 2003 taxable value of \$3,914,013. The Rayonier tract was identified as essential to this project with the Lake Santa Fe shoreline protection a concurrent priority.

2011

On December 9, 2011, this project was placed in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category of Florida Forever projects.

2012

On April 20, 2012, the ARC removed 174.5 acres from the project at the landowner's request.

2021

DEP acquired in fee simple 69.42 acres from Milledge Murphy and Kathryn Murphy that will be managed for conservation purposes by Alachua County.

Coordination

SRWMD and Alachua County are acquisition partners. Originally SRWMD had expressed an interest in buffering the Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area.

Management Policy Statement

The primary management goals for the Lake Santa Fe project are to protect Florida's surface water quality; to protect wetland and aquatic habitat for species associated with freshwater swamps and lakes; to preserve nesting and resting habitat for upland and aquatic species; to provide natural-



resource based outdoor recreation opportunities for the people of Florida including, but not limited to, fishing, boating, hiking, camping and nature appreciation; to help buffer and protect existing conservation lands at the Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area; and to protect Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community and landscape levels.

Manager(s)

FFS and FWC are recommended as unified managers of the fee simple portions of the project that are acquired. Alachua County and SJRWMD purchases will be managed by those entities.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation

This project is proposed for a unified Management Prospectus. Several parcels are adjacent to, and would provide buffer for, SRWMD's Santa Fe Swamp Conservation Area, several smaller named- lakes (including Bonnet Lake, Hickory Lake, Lake Alto and Little Lake Santa Fe). The project area is two miles west of the Camp Blanding Military Reservation, and three miles northeast of the Austin Cary Memorial Forest (managed by the University of Florida). This project is designed to protect the last remnants of undeveloped land around the Lake Santa Fe/Santa Fe Swamp headwaters system, by protecting shoreline, and upland and wetland natural communities. This would benefit the entire Santa Fe River system, including its associated fish and wildlife, hydrology and water quality. The project area includes functional wetlands (32 percent, or 3,429 acres), and provides protection for surface water (67 percent, or 7,247 acres of project area) and natural floodplain function (26 percent, or 2,817 acres of project area). Part of the project area (25 percent, or 2,635 acres) recharges the Floridan aquifer. This project is also significant as an ecological greenway, with 92 percent (9,894 acres) of the project area qualifying as priorities 4, 6 and 7 in potential importance, according to FNAI Florida Forever Measures Evaluation.

About 70 percent of the project is upland natural plant communities. Most uplands are pine plantation (6,136 acres), while remaining cover types (570 acres) include upland mixed forest and mesic flatwoods, which together make about 570 acres. Most of the uplands are pine plantation, which is 6,136 acres of flatwoods. About 775 acres of uplands are in agricultural use, most as improved pasture, with about 160 acres in row crops. There are 80 acres of residential properties within the project uplands. Wetland communities consist mostly of basin and dome swamp, which together comprise 2,300 acres. Other wetland communities include baygall and depression marsh. FNAI indicates that 6 percent (677 acres) of the project area are under-represented natural communities. The flatwoods salamander is an imperiled animal species documented at a breeding location in the proposed project. Focal species, which are indicators of natural communities and suitable habitat conditions for other species of wildlife, occur widely in the project area. FWC reports that more than 25 percent (2,725 acres) of the project area includes at least seven focal species. Another 55 percent (5,876 acres) of the project is a habitat conservation priority for rare species with the greatest conservation need, according to FNAI.

FFS and FWC are prepared to share all management responsibilities for Lake Santa Fe under the unified management concept that both agencies are developing. Under unified management, agencies will identify mutually acceptable goals that further the long-term protection of the site's plant and wildlife resources, promote sound stewardship of land, timber and water resources, and provide the public with access and quality recreational opportunities. Both agencies agree that the project has the capability to provide important protection for fish and wildlife habitat in a manner that is compatible with sound silvicultural practices. Since the project goals include protecting biodiversity and providing resource-based public recreational and educational opportunities, programs would be developed to manage ecosystems for multiple use. Multiple use means the harmonious and coordinated management of timber, recreation, conservation of fish and wildlife, forage, archaeological and historic sites, habitat and other biological resources, or water resources so that they are utilized in the combination that will best serve the people of the state, making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources and giving consideration to the relative values of the various resources. Conservation and protection of environmentally unique native habitats and threatened and endangered species should be an important management goal for the project. Particular attention should be directed to the protection of wetlands which are important habitat to the state and federally listed flatwoods salamander. Wetland drainage and converting wetlands to silviculture have contributed to the decline of this species throughout its range.

Management programs would promote recreation and environmental education in the natural environment. The project area will be managed to provide opportunities for bicycling, boating, canoeing, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, kayaking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. The Department of Environmental Protection and University of Florida Statewide Greenways System Planning Project shows 27 percent (2,937 acres) of the project area to be suitable for priority 1 or 2 recreational trails. The managing agencies would promote recreation and environmental education in the natural environment.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Most of the project is a medium-need tract that will require up-front resource management, including frequent prescribed fire where appropriate. About 60 percent of the project area has been subjected to ground cover disturbance due to past silviculture. Consequently, additional effort will be required to restore to a desired future condition. FFS and FWC propose to work cooperatively to assess site management needs and develop the Conceptual Management Plan (CMP) for the site. Examples of situations that will require cooperative effort include restoring flatwoods previously managed for timber production, removing off-site species, practices that promote regeneration of native ground cover, and reforesting ruderal and recently harvested areas. As part of the unified management approach, the managing agencies will conduct an historic vegetation analysis to determine appropriate desired future conditions and identify appropriate restoration methods and tools. This effort will help conserve habitats and populations of imperiled or rare species. Other unified management priorities include



protecting and restoring forested wetlands, and the identification, control, and follow-up monitoring of invasive exotic species. Biotic surveys would be conducted as part of early unified management activities. Due to the presence of imperiled or rare species expected to occur within the proposed project, it is anticipated that resource inventories would be an initial priority under the unified management approach.

Environmentally sensitive areas such as erosion-prone sites, listed species habitats, outstanding natural areas, and wetlands, are to be identified during the initial resource inventory to implement appropriate protective measures for each specific area. Such inventories are considered vital to unified management planning efforts directed at facility and infrastructure development, and design and implementation of recreational use programs.

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

During the first year after full acquisition, both agencies operating under the unified management approach will emphasize site security, posting boundaries, public access for low-intensity outdoor recreation, fire management, resource inventory, and removing refuse. Both managing agencies will meet frequently to coordinate task assignments, and cooperate with, and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local governments, and other appropriate participants as it affects management of the project site. Both managing agencies will participate in the joint development of a Combined Management Plan specifying area management goals and objectives.

Goals intended for long-term implementation would emphasize multiple use management and the conservation of the site's natural resources including timber, fish and wildlife, and water. These goals would include restoring habitat and hydrology and conserving and protecting imperiled or rare species of flora and fauna. Following completion of plant community inventory and historic vegetation analysis, quantified vegetation management objectives would be developed pursuant to an objective-based vegetation management process. Where practical, disturbed sites would be restored to conditions expected to occur in naturally functioning ecosystems, including re-establishment of species expected to occur naturally on specific sites. Management would emphasize enhancement of abundance, and spatial distribution of imperiled and rare species. Essential roads would be stabilized to provide all-weather public access and management operations. Programs providing multiple recreational uses would also be implemented.

Both agencies will work towards the development of a fire management plan that will apply prescribed burning in a manner that maximizes natural resource protection and enhancement. Most of this project area has not been burned by prescribed fire in recent years. Whenever possible, existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks will be utilized to contain, and control prescribed and natural fires. Growing season prescribed burning would be used where appropriate to best achieve management objectives. Timber resources will be managed using acceptable silvicultural practices. Thinning of timber, introduction of prescribed fire, and sustainable forestry management practices could provide silvicultural products, ecological, and recreational benefits. Archaeological and historic sites would be



managed in coordination with the Department of State's Division of Historical Resources. Both agencies will work to develop a road plan that identifies the roads to be used for access by the public, and roads that are required for administrative use. Unnecessary roads, fire lanes and hydrological disturbances would be restored as practical. The road plan would ensure that the public has appropriate access, and that sensitive resources are protected. Other existing infrastructure necessary for management would be protected to the extent possible. Infrastructure development would be the minimum required to serve needs of the public and would include provisions for facilities necessary for the security and management of the project area.

Revenue-generating potential

Timber sales would be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions, under a multiple-use management concept. Additional revenue would be generated from sales of hunting licenses, fishing licenses, wildlife management area permits, and other special hunting permits. Future revenues might be realized in the future from recreational user fees and ecotourism activities, if such projects can be economically developed. Fifteen percent of all gross revenues will be returned to the county from which funds were generated.

Cooperators in management activities

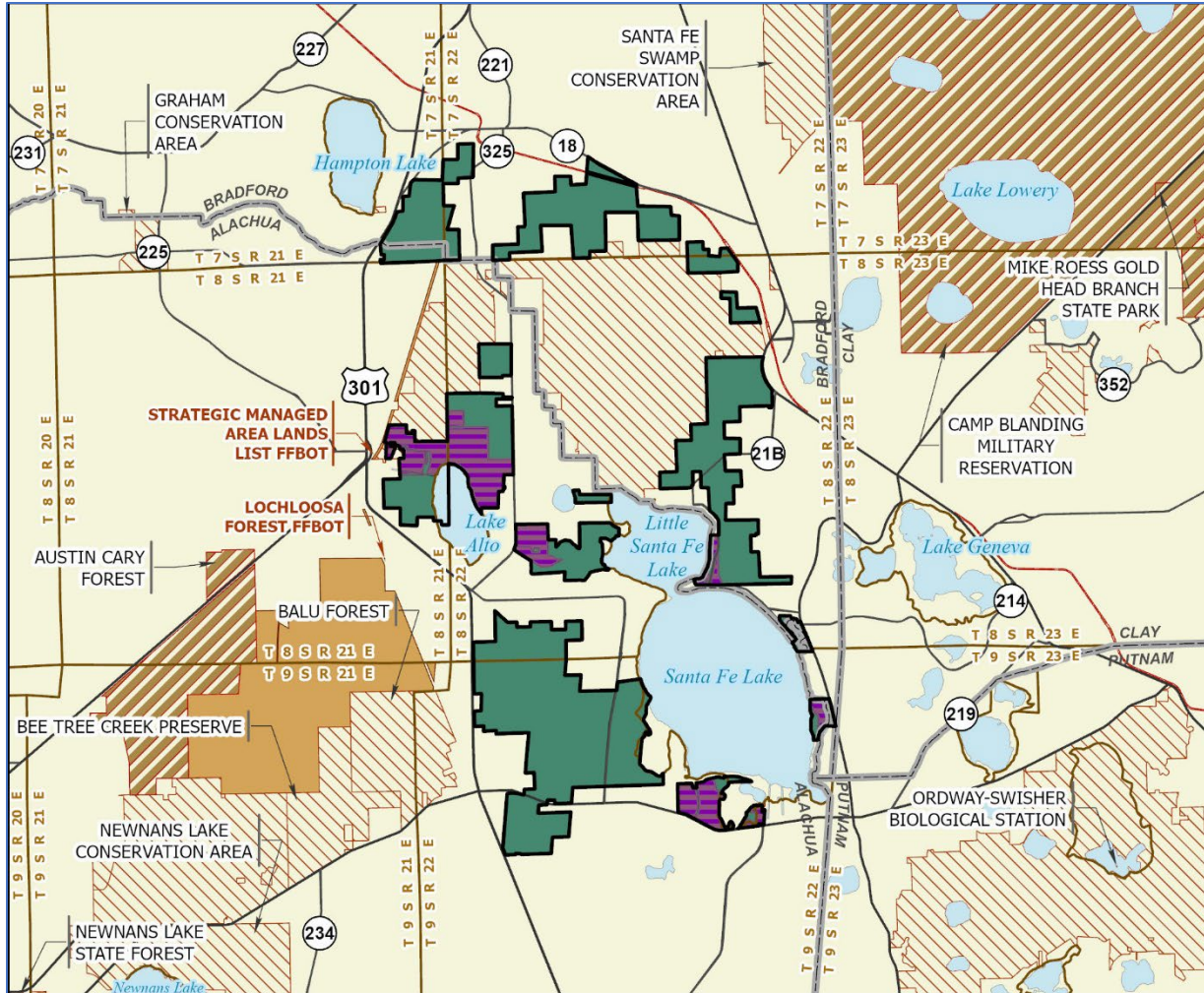
The unified managers (FFS and FWC) should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies, including SRWMD, to manage the project area.

Management Cost Summary

FFS and FWC	Startup	Recurring
Source of Funds	LATF	LATF
Resource Management	\$170,478	\$184,467
Administration	\$75,494	\$25,133
Support	\$149,080	\$31,566
Capital Improvements	\$1,412,903	\$124,743
Visitor/Recreation	\$2,404	\$141
Law Enforcement	\$7,518	\$7,158
TOTAL	\$1,817,877	\$373,568

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





LAKE SANTA FE

ALACHUA AND BRADFORD COUNTIES

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



FEBRUARY 2022

Map 1: FNAI, February 2022

