

Limestone Ranch

Less-Than-Fee

Hardee

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2012
<i>Project Acres</i>	6,382
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	6,382
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$25,430,158

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Limestone Ranch project will provide a buffer for Limestone Creek, a tributary of the Peace River with high water quality. The project will provide habitat protection and enhancement for numerous rare species and imperiled natural communities. Conserving Limestone Ranch will afford additional resource protection for the Peace River and riverine wetlands within the boundaries of the Peace River State Forest, Horse Creek Ranch and Peace River Refuge Florida Forever projects, the downstream Charlotte Harbor Estuary, and the Gasparilla Sound-Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve.

This project will protect Florida's biodiversity by preserving 1,500 acres of Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for species such as the swallow-tail kite, Cooper's Hawk, Eastern indigo snake, Florida sandhill crane, and manatees. The project will support landscape linkages by connecting with the Horse Creek Ranch, Peace River Refuge and the Peaceful Horse Ranch. The project advances the protection, restoration and maintenance of water and wetlands by conserving 762 acres of floodplain and strategic areas for aquifer recharge as well as opportunities for sustainable forest management.

General Description

Limestone Ranch is 6,382 acres located just west of the Peace River, with the southeast corner straddling a half mile section of the river. The property is bisected by Limestone Creek which flows eastward into the Peace River. The proposed project is adjacent to the northeastern corner of the Horse Creek Ranch Florida Forever BOT project approved in 2010. Morgan Park (De Soto County) and the Peace River Refuge Florida Forever BOT project are approximately seven miles south of Limestone Ranch. The surrounding area is largely cattle pasture and citrus groves with remnant flatwoods adjacent to the mostly natural forested wetland corridor along the Peace River.

County Road (CR) 663 runs through the western portion of the property. Access to the property is east from the community of Limestone off CR 663.

Limestone Ranch is a mosaic of flatwoods, forested wetlands and pastures. Major natural communities include mesic and scrubby flatwoods, bottomland forest, and widely scattered depression marshes. The

natural communities cover approximately 3,774 acres of the tract and appear to be in good to very good condition. Invasive exotic plants are relatively infrequent on the property. The land is home to two under-represented natural community types -- 1,919 acres of pine flatwoods, and 42 acres of scrubby flatwoods. Approximately 1,500 acres of the site are identified as a Strategic Habitat Conservation Area. The disturbed portion of the land comprises improved pastures and agricultural fields. For the ranch's cow-calf operation, cattle-grazing is the primary use of the improved pasture. There is a 92-acre citrus grove out-parcel in the southeast section of the property, at the end of Jim Williams Road.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
<i>giant orchid</i>	G2G3/S2
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3

Public Use

Limestone Ranch is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. However, the owner has hosted FWC-coordinated youth hunts annually on the property and expressed interest in continuing to offer that periodic recreational opportunity.

Acquisition Planning

2012

The Limestone Ranch project in Hardee County was submitted as a conservation easement by the landowner, Mr. David M. Durando. On June 15, 2012, the ARC added this project to the Florida Forever Priority List as a Less-than-Fee project. In 2012, the project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$18,830,416.

The property is in one ownership, and the owner is anticipating selling it in one transaction.

Coordination

In 2012, no acquisition partners were identified.

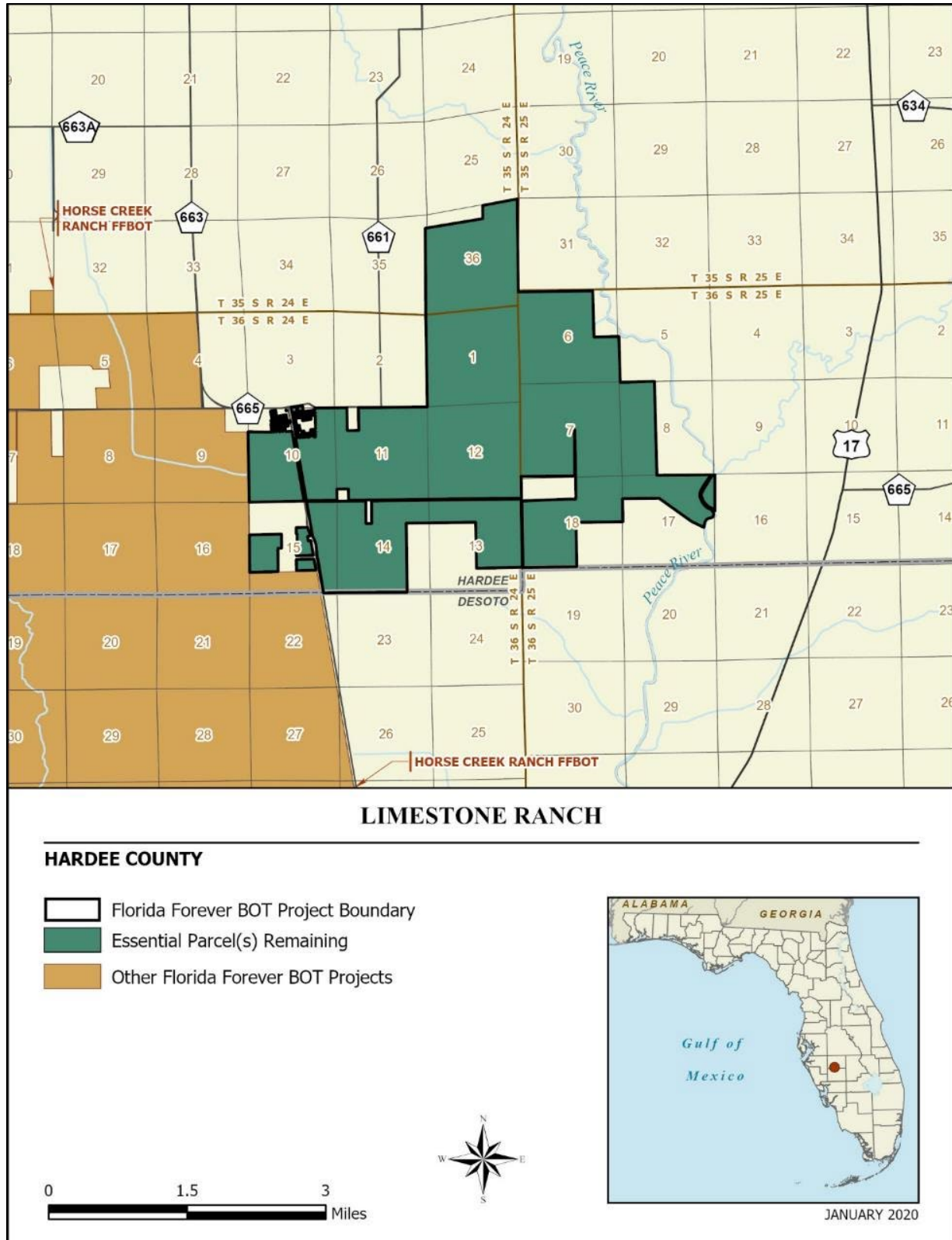
Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the Limestone Ranch 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 Limestone Ranch 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 the Office of Environmental Services.





Map 1: FNAI, January 2020