

Shoal River Buffer

Critical Natural Lands

Okaloosa

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2010
<i>Project Acres</i>	2,188
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	2,188
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$3,043,606

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Shoal River Buffer project will protect the water quality of the Shoal River drainage area, preserve habitat for rare and imperiled plant and animal species, and support conservation landscape connectivity. The project will protect habitat for species such as the Florida black bear, alligator snapping turtle, sweet pitcher plants, and hairy indigo. The project will conserve 1,768 acres of rare species habitat, 2,062 acres of ecological greenways, 1,419 acres of surface waters, and 1,443 acres of functional wetlands. The Shoal River Buffer will provide the public with natural resource-based recreation opportunities; and the Shoal River is designated as an Outstanding Florida Water.

General Description

The Shoal River Buffer Florida Forever project is offered for fee simple acquisition of 2,188 acres in eastern Okaloosa County. The tract is divided into two distinct parcels east and west of the Shoal River and 5.5 miles from the convergence of the Yellow River. It is bisected by land owned by Okaloosa County that consists of the immediate floodplain bordering the Shoal River. A portion of the western tract is adjacent to Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) to the south and the city of Crestview to the west. The eastern portion is bordered by Titi Creek to the south and agricultural lands to the north.

Natural communities located within the project include upland hardwood forest, sandhills, mesic/wet flatwoods, floodplain forest, basin swamp, and blackwater stream. The site also has intact seepage slopes. The wetland types on both tracts have intact forest cover and are typical for the region. Timber species include oaks, cypress, Atlantic White Cedar, maple, and titi. The upland areas vary from excessively well drained to poorly drained sites. The extremely xeric sites are predominately longleaf pine with scattered sand pine. Understory tree species include typical xeric oaks and shrubs. Mesic sites contain slash, longleaf and loblolly pines with oaks, sweetgum and maple intermixed.

The tract provides the AFB with a critical buffer for both military operations and smoke generated from burning operations on base. The Shoal River Paddling Trail (designated by the Office of Greenways and

Trails) stretches nine and half miles through the property with access points north (Ray Barnes Boat Ramp) and southwest (Bill Duggar Jr. Park) of the property.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Gulf Coast redflower pitcherplant</i>	G3G4T2T3/S2S3
<i>hairy wild indigo</i>	G3T3/S3
Lavender burrowing crayfish	G4/S2

Public Use

As on all FWC-managed areas, development of facilities would be kept to the minimum level necessary to assure protection of the resources, while providing for compatible recreation opportunities. Any such minimal development would be confined to areas of previous disturbance. The property has potential for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, picnicking, primitive camping, nature interpretive trails and geocaching.

Acquisition Planning

2009

The project is owned by the Haiseal Timber company and is proposed for fee-simple acquisition. On December 11, 2009, the ARC voted to add this project with a 2009 tax assessed value of \$3,841,189 to the March 2010 Florida Forever list.

2011

On December 9, 2011, the ARC placed this project in the Critical Natural Lands category of projects.

2012

On April 20, 2012, the ARC added 80 acres to the project that had been authorized for sale as surplus by the US Forest Service.

Coordination

DOD expressed interest in partnering with the state in acquiring this land. Furthermore, NFWFMD has expressed to DOD that it has interest in 500 acres or more of the property located along the county's riverfront ownership.

Management Policy Statement

The purpose for acquisition would be to protect the water quality of the Shoal River drainage area which harbors rare plant and animal species; to sustain wildlife in the area, particularly to provide long-term benefits to imperiled species; and to provide natural resource-based recreation opportunities.

Conservation and protection of environmentally unique native habitats, and imperiled and rare species, will be important management goals for the project. A prescribed fire management regime would likely



be a primary management goal. Dense stands of regenerated pines will probably need to be thinned before introducing fire.

Manager(s)

FWC is the recommended manager for lands within this project acquired by both the BOT and NFWFMD. NFWFMD has indicated it will convey any lands the agency acquires within this project to the BOT at no cost.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation

About 68 percent of the project is habitat for a range of at least 3-7 or more focal species (imperiled or rare wildlife). About 76 percent of the Shoal River Buffer tract lies within a designated FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for the Florida black bear, listed as threatened by the State. In addition, FNAI's 2008 GIS data indicates potential habitat for blackmouth shiner, Gulf sturgeon, Eastern indigo snake, Escambia map turtle, Florida black bear, and red-cockaded woodpecker. The eastern tract consists mainly of a sandhill and pineland habitat dominated by longleaf with scattered sand pine. The understory consists mainly of xeric oaks and shrubs. Several listed species could potentially benefit from ongoing restoration of historic and current sandhill habitats on the proposed lands. The State listed species of special concern the fox squirrel and the State threatened southeastern American kestrel use sandhill habitats, as do red-cockaded woodpeckers, a federally endangered species. Sandhills also support populations of gopher tortoises, which are listed by the State of Florida as threatened. Bears have been documented utilizing riparian corridors of the Shoal River and its tributaries in Okaloosa County and are well documented on Eglin AFB, a primary breeding range for bears in the state.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

The Shoal River Buffer project includes natural areas likely requiring application of resource management activities, such as ecological restoration of ground cover, control of invasive and exotic species, reforestation, and prescribed fire where appropriate. Such activities may be necessary to accomplish management objectives to attain the desired future condition for the area. This is especially important for conservation of habitats and populations of imperiled or rare species. Landscape-scale ecology and management concerns may also need to be considered.

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

During the first year following acquisition, emphasis will be placed on site security, posting boundaries, public access, prescribed fire management, resource inventory, exotic species control, and removal of refuse. Within one year, a 10-year management plan will be developed by FWC describing short-term and long-term management goals, and measurable inventory, exotic species control, and removal of refuse. Within one year, a 10-year management plan will be developed by FWC describing short-term objectives with associated timelines for completion.



Revenue-generating potential

The revenue generating potential of the Shoal River Buffer is not known and will depend upon future uses to be approved in the management plan. However, revenue from such environmental lands might include sales of various permits and recreational user fees and ecotourism activities if such projects could be economically developed.

Cooperators in management activities

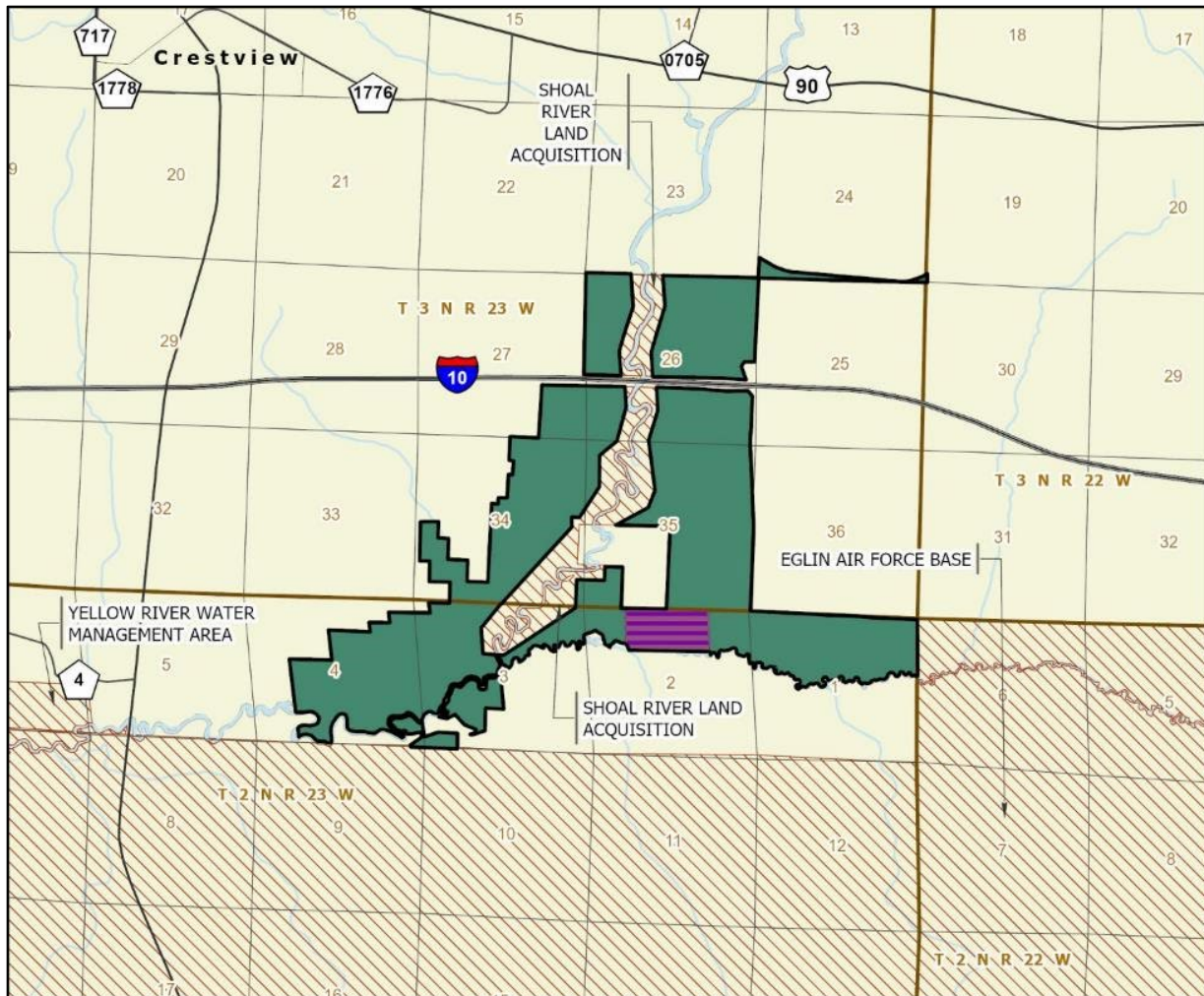
FWC may partner and cooperate with other State and local governmental agencies including DEP; FFS; NFWFMD; DOD (Eglin AFB); and Okaloosa County in management of the property.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Resource Management	\$74,548	\$48,848
Administration	\$82,345	\$33,072
Support	\$149,080	\$31,566
Capital Improvements	\$45,000	\$38,689
Visitor Services/Recreation	\$1,452	\$141
Law Enforcement	\$1,474	\$1,474




Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





SHOAL RIVER BUFFER

OKALOOSA COUNTY

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



JANUARY 2020



Map 1: FNAI, January 2020