

# Triple Diamond

Critical Natural Lands

Okeechobee

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2009
<i>Project Acres</i>	7,998
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	2,662
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$4,200,000
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	5,336
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$15,077,644

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Triple Diamond project will preserve significant areas of dry prairie, important in the long-term protection of this endemic natural community and the rare species that it supports, as well as provide recreational and research opportunities. Additionally, preserving this intact and well-managed landscape would allow for the protection and management of thousands of acres of additional high-quality habitats in an area of Florida known for its rare vertebrate wildlife, globally imperiled natural communities, and significant hydrological values. This project is bordered on the north by the Kissimmee River Prairie Preserve State Park. Other public lands in the near vicinity include Avon Park Air Force Range, Bombing Range Ridge, and the Kissimmee River to the west and Fort Drum Marsh Conservation Area and Blue Cypress Conservation Area to the east. The Kissimmee-St. Johns River Connector Florida Forever Project is also located within seven miles to the east of the property. Triple Diamond, along with existing conservation lands, would contribute to a large, contiguous landscape-sized protection area of more than 200,000 acres.

## General Description

Triple Diamond is a working ranch and is exemplary in its retention of Florida's native prairie. Natural communities comprise 80 percent of the property and include basin marsh, depression marsh, dome swamp, dry and wet prairie, mesic hammock, and swales or sloughs. Dry prairie, endemic to this region of the state, is the most prevalent natural community on the proposed site. A smaller acreage of wet prairie occurs as open, herbaceous areas occupying lower spots in the dry prairie and in ecotones between wetlands and the dry prairie. The dry prairie provides habitat for state and federally listed animal species such as gopher tortoise, Florida grasshopper sparrow and crested caracara. Together dry and wet prairies make up approximately 42 percent of the property's acreage and comprise one of the largest and perhaps highest quality blocks of native prairie remaining on private lands. Much of the Triple Diamond prairie has been burned frequently, often in the growing season, and is in excellent condition. Interconnected swale/slough and depression marsh wetlands form a branching network that spreads over the length and breadth of Triple Diamond. There are also isolated depression/basin

marshes scattered over the property. One small dome swamp is in the northeastern portion of the project. The canopy is dominated by mature pond cypress surrounding a small, disturbed pond. A large, modern two-story home is in the southwestern part of the site as part of a complex of management facilities that also includes an equipment barn and horse stables.

### FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida sandhill crane	G5T2/S2
Crested caracara	G5/S2

### Public Use

The Triple Diamond project has the potential of providing a diverse recreational experience. There is already a well-maintained road system occurring throughout the property and all the existing facilities can greatly enhance the recreational and research potential of the property. There is a potential for a full range of trail activities including short distance nature trails, long distance hiking trails, bicycle trails and equestrian trails can be accommodated. Nature appreciation and wildlife observation as well as both primitive and facility camping could be supported. The infrastructure already on the property is in excellent shape and the existing residence could be converted to a spacious visitor/educational center. The barn and corrals could be used as part of an equestrian center for trail rides.

### Acquisition Planning

#### **2009**

On June 12, 2009, the ARC recommended that the Triple Diamond Ranch be added to the Florida Forever list as an A list project. In 2009, the project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$\$23,007,107.

#### **2010**

On June 11, 2010, the ARC placed this project into the Critical Natural Lands category.

### Coordination

TNC is considered an acquisition partner on this project.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of managing the Triple Diamond Ranch are to protect and manage thousands of acres of additional high-quality habitats in an area of Florida known for its rare vertebrate wildlife, globally imperiled natural communities, and significant hydrological values.

### Manager(s)

DRP is the recommended to manage this site as part of Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park.



**Management Prospectus**

**Qualifications for state designation**

This intact and well-managed landscape would allow protection and management of thousands of acres of additional high-quality habitats in an area of Florida known for its rare vertebrate wildlife, globally imperiled natural communities, and significant hydrological values. This project has the potential for providing a diverse resource-based recreation experience.

**Conditions affecting intensity of management**

The property should not require intense management in the short term; however, the buildings on the property will need to be maintained. Over the long term, the intensity of management and related costs will significantly increase as management emphasis shifts from protection and restoration efforts with limited public uses to a broader public use area with more use of the substantial infrastructure already on the property.

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

Once the property is acquired and assigned to DRP, short term management efforts will concentrate on site security, control of vehicle access and management planning. Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park will serve initially as a point of access for low intensity resource-based recreation, such as hiking. Consideration will be given in the management planning process for the provision of access from other locations to accommodate recreation development. The magnitude and diversity of future resource-based recreation opportunities offered will in great part depend on establishment of a management plan for the property, funding for positions and using established infrastructure.

**Revenue-generating potential**

No significant revenue is expected to be initially generated. The future revenue will depend on the nature and extent of public use and the use of the facilities already on the property. Vendors for future operation of the equestrian facility and two-story house will be considered.

**Cooperators in management activities**

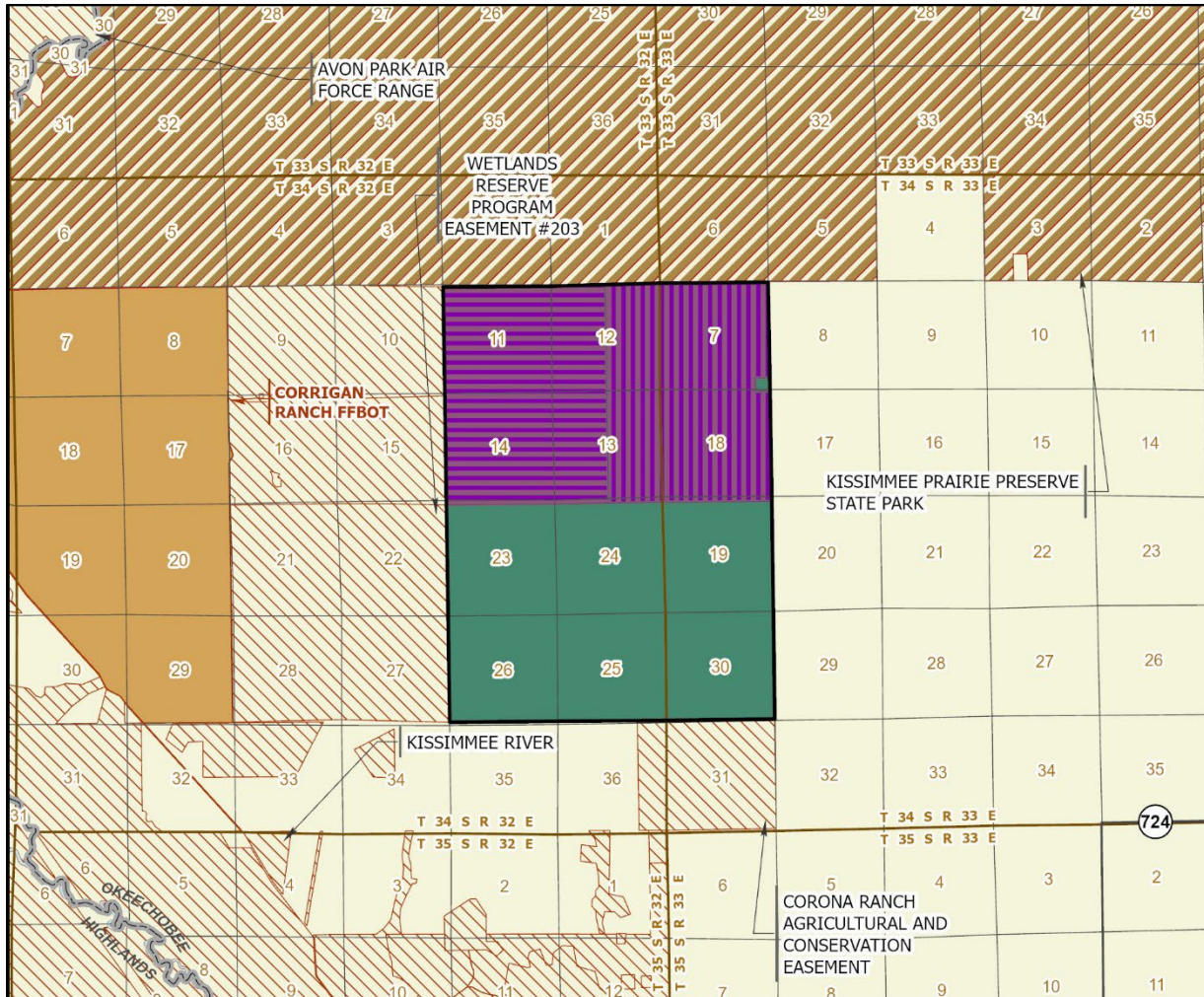
No local governments or others are recommended for management of this project. The DRP will cooperate with and seek the advice of other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate.

Management Cost Summary

<u>DRP</u>	<u>Startup</u>
Salary (1 FTE, 1 OPS)	\$52,000
Expense	\$50,000
OCO	\$150,000
Outsourcing	\$20,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$272,000</b>

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





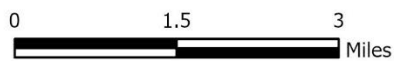
**TRIPLE DIAMOND**

**OKEECHOBEE COUNTY**

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



FEBRUARY 2022



Map 1: FNAI, February 2022

