

Welannee Watershed Forest

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Okaloosa

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2020
<i>Project Acres</i>	8,378
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	8,378
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$9,766,171

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Welannee Watershed Forest project will protect upper stretches of the Yellow River and provide connectivity to adjacent conservation lands. The project will preserve habitat critical to species such as the Gulf sturgeon, gopher tortoise, Florida black bear, and alligator snapping turtle. It will provide connectivity to the north boundary of the Yellow River Water Management Area and the Blackwater River State Forest. Protection of this upper stretch of the Yellow River is critical to various plans associated with the protection of the major rivers in panhandle Florida. The southern boundary of the property is adjacent to the northern limits of the Yellow River Water Management Area, which provides a landscape linkage with Eglin Air Force Base. The north boundary of the project is adjacent to the boundary for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conecuh National Forest.

General Description

The Welannee Watershed Forest proposal consists of floodplain and adjacent upland habitat along the Yellow River, from the Florida-Alabama state line extending downstream for approximately 11.5 straight-line miles (estimated 15–16 river miles). The project contains two large timber tracts: the first is owned by H.T.L. Family Limited Partnership (HTL) that stretches along both sides of the Yellow River from the north boundary of the Yellow River Water Management Area to the Alabama state line. The second tract is owned by U.I.L. Family Limited Partnership (UIL) that is located on the east side of the Yellow River which it borders for 3.6 miles. There is a small discontinuity within the northern tract at highway SR-2. Blackwater River State Forest lies generally 0.5 to 2 miles west of the northern tract, which encompasses both banks of the river, although the Forest and proposal share a small common border. The Yellow River Water Management Area lies immediately downstream of the northern tract (sharing a short common border) and directly across the river from the southern tract, which itself is restricted to the eastern side of the river.

The project is comprised of approximately 30% floodplain forest and wetlands, and 70% uplands, most of which is planted pine plantation that has been historically planted with loblolly pine. The project contains more than 500 acres of longleaf pine and, as loblolly pine is harvested, the owners are

transitioning suitable uplands to longleaf pine. The project is managed under a very active prescribed fire regime, with the longleaf burned on a two-year rotation and other upland areas burned on a three-year rotation. The facilities and equipment for the management of the project's forest resources are located on-site. The project is managed not only for its timber resources, but also with the purpose of restoring longleaf pine habitat, particularly groundcover for wildlife. The property is managed to promote healthy populations of game wildlife such as whitetail deer and turkey.

Welannee Watershed Forest includes the same properties as the original Upper Yellow River Florida Forever project which was removed from the priority list in 2011 when the land was no longer available for acquisition.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Gulf sturgeon	G3T2T3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Narrow pigtoe	G1G2/S1
Choctaw bean	G2G3/S1S2
Escambia map turtle	G2/S2
Alligator snapping turtle	G3/S3
Eastern chipmunk	G5/S2
Pine barrens treefrog	G4/S3
<i>little brown jug</i>	G5/S3

Public Use

As the project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition, public access is not available. However, upon coordination with the landowner, FFS could provide Operation Outdoor Freedom events and/or FWC could organize youth hunting opportunities.

Acquisition Planning

In October 2020, the ARC added the Welannee Watershed Forest project to the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category of the 2021 Florida Forever Priority List. This less-than-fee project was proposed by Conservation Florida and consists of eleven parcels among two ownerships.

Coordination

Additional funding to assist with acquisition has been secured through federal grants from the Forest Legacy Program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. The Forest Legacy Program requires a non-federal match of 25% which could be met with Florida Forever funds.

Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the Welannee Watershed Forest project would continue to be managed for conservation purposes by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.



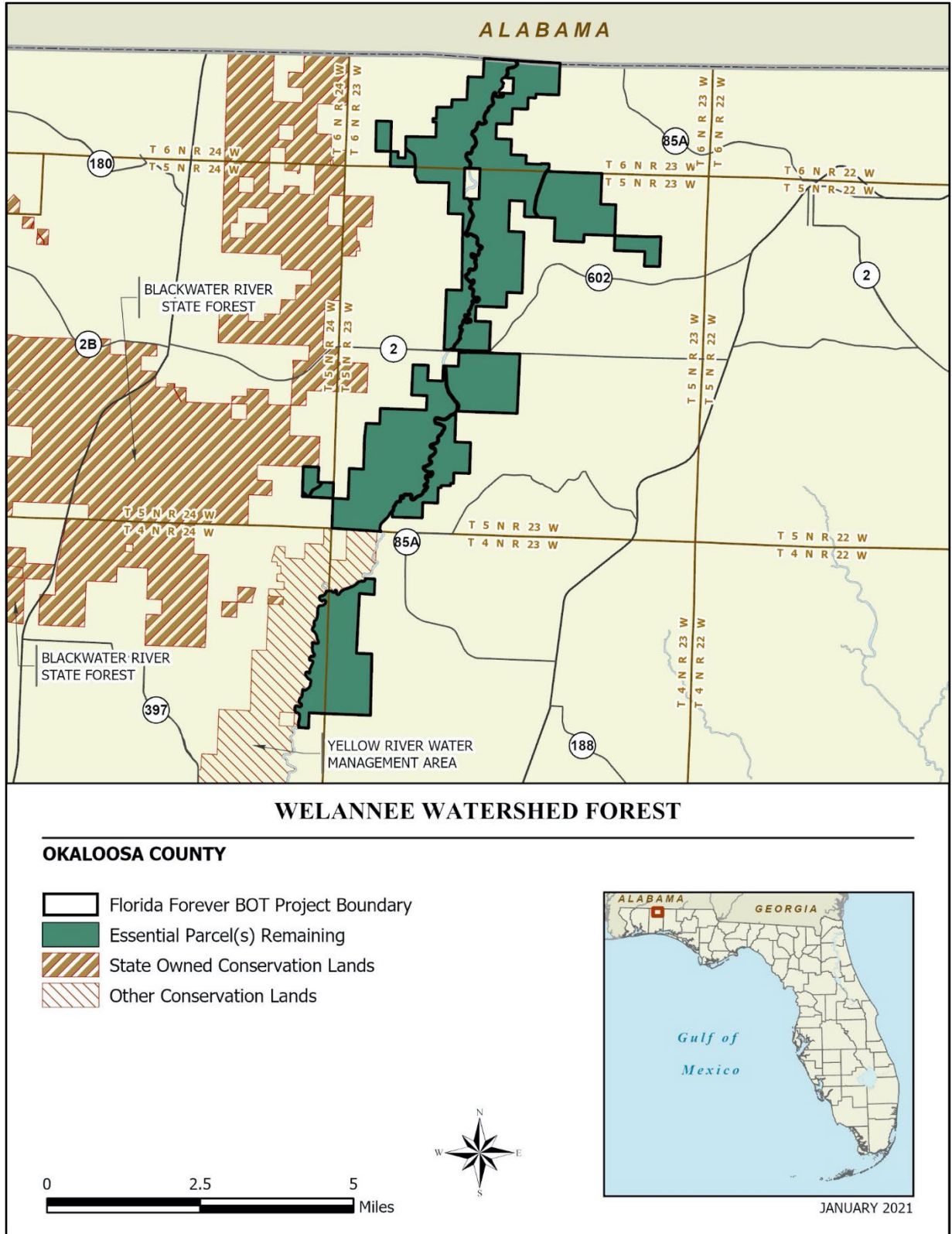
Manager(s)

OES will periodically monitor the conservation easement over the property while the primary management will be by the private property owner.

Management Prospectus

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Map 1: FNAI, January 2021