

Wilson Ranch

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Polk

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2021
<i>Project Acres</i>	451
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	451
<i>2020 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$283,510

Purpose for State Acquisition

The goal of the Wilson Ranch project is to protect and restore the Peace River headwaters, valuable wildlife habitat, and regionally significant wetlands, water resources and natural floodplain function along the Upper Peace River. The project represents an important link in a critical conservation corridor of existing public land and private conservation easements and will expand opportunities for resource-based public outdoor recreation within the Peace River Basin.

General Description

Wilson Ranch is located in Polk County and owned by C Wilson Ranch Inc. , Thomas Richard Wilson, Dana Dawn Wilson, and Bobbi Jean Wilson. The site is currently utilized as an active cattle ranch and is characterized by pasture, upland forest, bottomland forest, and swampland. Wilson Ranch is located within the Peace River Basin and contains the confluence of Peace Creek and Saddle Creek (the headwaters of the Peace River). The project lies along the Atlantic Flyway and provides habitat for state and federally listed birds and reptiles. Over half of the site also lies within a designated FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for species such as the Florida snail kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), and American swallow-tailed kite (*Elanoides forficatus*). Despite past hydrological alterations at Wilson Ranch, many of the species found on-site are associated with natural wetland communities. Three archaeological sites and two Linear Resource Groups have also been documented within the project.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

FNAI Elements	Score
Roseate spoonbill	G5/S2
Glossy ibis	G5/S3
Little blue heron	G5/S4
White ibis	G5/S4

Public Use

The Wilson Ranch project is proposed for fee-simple acquisition and may be utilized for public outdoor recreation if acquired. A primary objective is to protect the resources on-site while providing access and compatible passive recreation opportunities. Potential activities are hiking, wildlife education and viewing, bicycling, and fishing. Recreation activities will be evaluated in order to limit impacts to the natural resources and alteration of natural habitats. Observation areas may include educational signage describing the importance of the site, mainly its ecological value to the Peace River, Saddle Creek and the Peace River Basin.

Acquisition Planning

2021

In April 2021, the ARC added the Wilson Ranch project to the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category of the 2021 Florida Forever Priority List.

Management Policy Statement

Management will focus on the preservation and restoration of the resources onsite with an emphasis on the water resources. Where compatible with the site's resources, passive resource-based recreation will be provided to the public.

The following management goals and objectives were identified:

- To preserve, maintain, enhance and restore natural communities and wildlife habitat
- To protect and sustain populations of threatened and endangered species
- To allow restoration of the wetland systems
- To provide connectivity to adjacent conservation lands
- To provide appropriate nature-based recreation that offers public enjoyment of the site without damaging the unique natural habitats
- To periodically review, evaluate and modify the management of the Wilson Ranch property

Manager(s)

The recommended manager is the Polk County Environmental Lands Program (PCELP).



Management Prospectus

Conditions affecting intensity of management

The conditions which will affect the intensity of management will be directly related to the goals for the site. A full assessment will need to be conducted to determine the condition of natural resources described above and extent of restoration feasible at the site. Implementation of compatible recreation will also affect the intensity of management. This will be included in the site assessment and incorporated into the ten-year management plan.

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

Once acquisition is completed, a site assessment will be conducted, and the management plan will be drafted. As the plan is created, securing the site and low impact accessibility improvements will begin. Any extensive improvements for restoration or allowing public access will not be initiated until the final management plan is accepted by the State.

Revenue-generating potential

PCELP currently manages 13 natural areas that protect and restore water, wildlife and wilderness while allowing passive outdoor recreation. There are no plans to generate revenue from this site. If plans to generate revenue come to light, then it will be addressed in the management plan.

Cooperators in management activities

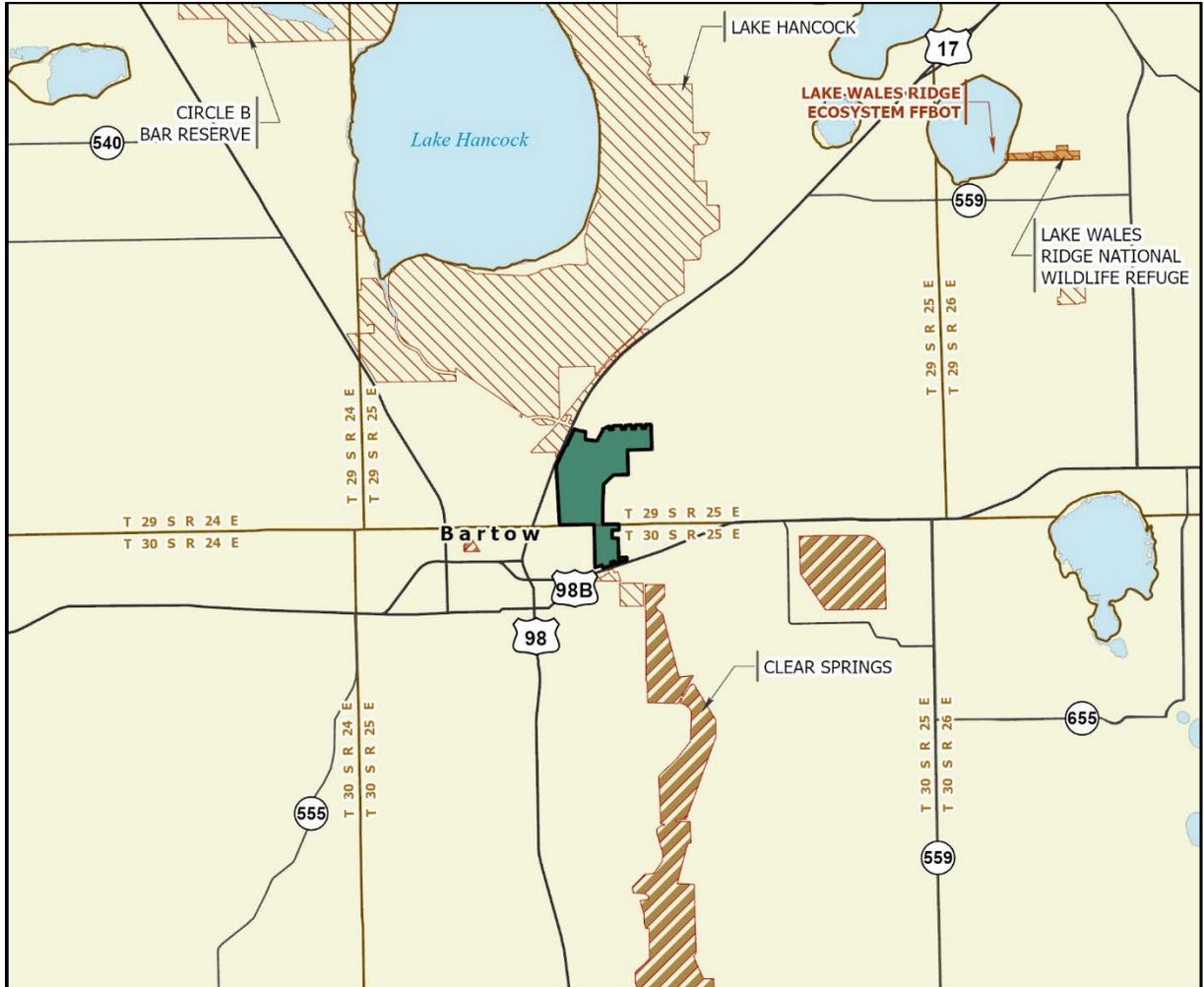
The Polk County will be the agency charged with managing the subject property and implementing the management plan. Other agencies that may cooperatively assist Polk County in the long-term management include the FFS, FDEP, FWC and the SWFWMD.

Management Cost Summary

<u>PCELP</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Site Security (fencing/gate repair, boundary signs)	\$30,000
Invasive Plant Management	\$15,000
Final Management Plan	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$55,000

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





WILSON RANCH

POLK COUNTY

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



FEBRUARY 2022



Map 1: FNAI, February 2022

