

2021 Florida Forever Five-Year Plan  
***Florida Springs Coastal Greenway***

Summary of Recommendations and Status  
as of  
December 2020



Division of State Lands  
Florida Department of Environmental Protection



# Florida Springs Coastal Greenway

Substantially Complete Project

Citrus

### Project-at-a-Glance

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Year Added to Priority List            | 1995          |
| Project Acres                          | 60,573        |
| Acquired Acres                         | 51,718        |
| Cost of Acquired Acres                 | \$106,262,527 |
| Remaining Project Acres                | 8,855         |
| 2019 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres | \$29,058,337  |

### Purpose for State Acquisition

The ragged coastline of Citrus County, with its salt marshes, clear spring runs, hammocks, and flatwoods, is being affected by the encroaching development in this part of the state. The Florida Springs Coastal Greenway project will conserve the natural landscape of this coast, protecting the water quality of the spring runs and estuaries where endangered manatees congregate, preserving natural lands that link with conservation lands to the south, and providing scenic areas where the public can enjoy fishing, hiking, or learning about the natural world of this coast.

### Manager(s)

Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) is to manage the Crystal River and St. Martins River property and the northern part of the project, adjacent to the Cross Florida Greenway.; Florida Forest Service (FFS) to manage Homosassa Reserve/Walker Property.

### General Description

The project is a major link in efforts to preserve the northern peninsular Gulf Coast. It includes three tracts along the karst coastline of Citrus County. The Crystal River tract, a significant part of the headwaters of the Crystal River, is a crucial habitat for the Gulf Coast manatee



population; it is also a prime nesting location for bald eagles and ospreys. Natural communities within the tract include floodplain marsh, freshwater tidal swamp, tidal marsh, and upland hammock. It also contains some pine plantations. The St. Martins River tract is predominantly hydric hammock, bottomland forest, salt marsh, mangrove islands, and spring-run streams, all in good to excellent condition. It borders the St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve. Though much of its timber has been harvested, and a quarter is in pasture, the Homosassa Reserve/Walker Property is important as a corridor between Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area and Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge and the conservation lands to the north. The archaeological significance of this area is high. Citrus County is one of the fastest growing in the state, and residential development is a serious threat here. Development will increase boat traffic, which is the greatest current threat to the manatee population.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

| <u>FNAI Elements</u>     | <u>Score</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Manatee                  | G2G3/S2      |
| Florida scrub-jay        | G2?/S2       |
| Eastern indigo snake     | G3/S2?       |
| Green sea turtle         | G3/S2S3      |
| Gopher tortoise          | G3/S3        |
| Florida mouse            | G3/S3        |
| Swallow-tailed kite      | G5/S2        |
| Florida black bear       | G5T4/S4      |
| Hawksbill sea turtle     | G3/S1        |
| <i>Tampa vervain</i>     | G2/S2        |
| Florida olive hairstreak | G5T2/S2      |
| Gulf salt marsh mink     | G5T2/S2      |

*30 rare species are associated with the project*

**Public Use**

The project will be managed as buffer preserves and a state forest, providing such recreational opportunities as fishing, canoeing, hiking and camping.

**Acquisition Planning**

***1994***

On November 19, 1994, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council (LAAC) amended Crystal River to add three tracts that include Three Sisters Springs (56 acres). On that date, LAAC also combined three CARL projects (Crystal River, St. Martins, and Homosassa Reserve) and renamed the project Florida Springs Coastal Greenway.



The project breakdown is as follows: Crystal River (~14,758 acres) Phase I: Crystal River II; Phase II: Crystal Cove—major owner is Burnip and Sims (acquired); Phase III: Crystal River State Reserve—major owner is Hollins (acquired). St. Martins (~14,040 acres) Phase I: Large ownerships within Area I as identified in Project Design; Phase II: Other ownerships within Area I and large ownerships within Area II; Phase III: Other ownerships within Area II; and Phase IV: ownerships in Area III. Major tracts have been acquired. Only smaller strategic tracts and offshore islands remain.

Homosassa Reserve (~8,577 acres) Phase I: Rooks tract (acquired); the Walker tract (acquired by the Southwest Florida Water Management District) and other ownerships except in Sections 28, 33, 34 and 7; Phase II: minor ownerships in Sections 28 and 33, the 160-acre Villa Sites Addition to Homosassa Sub in Section 34, also the 134-acre Johnson parcel in Section 7. All large and strategic ownerships with willing sellers have been acquired with the exception of the Black ownership, an unwilling seller. This portion of the project is, in effect, complete.

### *1995*

On March 10, 1995, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council (LAMAC) approved a fee- simple, 424-acre addition (in former Crystal River project) to the project boundary. The addition was sponsored by the landowners, James C and Alice H. Rhoades, and had a 1994 taxable value of \$821,700.

On October 30, 1995, the LAMAC approved a fee-simple, 200-acre addition (in former Crystal River project) to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by landowner Corneal B Myers, consisted of one parcel and a 1994 taxable value of \$400,000.

### *1996*

On October 30, 1996, the LAMAC transferred this project to the Substantially Complete Category.

### *1997*

On March 14, 1997, the LAMAC approved a fee-simple, 80-acre addition (in former Crystal River project) to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by landowner Dixie Hollins, consisted of one parcel and a 1996 taxable value of \$64,000.

### *1998*

On October 15, 1998, the LAMAC designated an additional 156 acres as essential. Previous essential parcels included land acquired as of January 26, 1995, and the Black ownership (in the former Homosassa Reserve project).



### *2001*

On April 6, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) adopted a Group A and Group B for the Florida Forever (FF) Priority list and moved this project to Group B. On December 5, 2003, the ARC moved this project to Group A of the 2004 FF Priority list.

### *2004*

On February 6, 2004, the ARC approved a fee-simple, 142-acre addition (in former Homosassa Reserve project) to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by the Audubon Society and DEPs CAMA and DRP, consisted of two landowners (Hampton Facilities LTD and Barr), 2 parcels, and a 2003 taxable value of \$524,000.

### *2010*

On July 28, 2010, the Southwest Florida Water Management District closed on the 57-acre Three Sisters Springs property in Crystal River, paying with a combination of water-management district money and Florida Forever funds allocated to the Florida Communities Trust. It is primarily owned by the City of Crystal River and is managed by the USFWS.

### *2011*

On September 30, 2011, NDCD, LLC donated 25.82 acres (Old Greiner Parcel-valued at \$146,285) to be managed by DRP.

On December 9, 2011, the ARC placed this project in the Climate Change Lands category of Florida Forever projects.

### *2020*

On June 12, 2020, the ARC approved an addition of 149-acres in Citrus County to the project boundary.

### **Coordination**

The Southwest Florida Water Management District has acquired a major ownership within the project, as well as tracts adjacent and south of the project area.

### **Management Policy Statement**

The primary goals of management of the Florida Springs Coastal Greenway project are: to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests; to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or



wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect; to provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural-resource- based recreation; and to preserve significant archaeological or historical sites.

## Management Prospectus

### *Qualifications for state designation*

The proximity of the Crystal River and St. Martins River tracts of the Florida Springs Coastal Greenway Project to the St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve and its major freshwater sources qualifies them as a state buffer preserve. The size and restorable forest resources of the Homosassa Reserve/Walker Property tract make it suitable for a state forest.

### *Manager*

DRP is recommended as the lead manager. The FFS will manage the Homosassa Reserve tract.

### *Conditions affecting intensity of management*

Portions of the Florida Springs Coastal Greenway include lands that would be considered “low-need” tracts requiring basic resource management and protection. However, increasing public pressure for recreational access and a developing ecotourism industry may push portions of this project into the “moderate to high-need” category.

### *Timetable for implementing management and provisions for security and protection of infrastructure*

Within the first year after acquisition, management will concentrate on site security, public and fire management access, resource inventory, and exotic removal. DRP and FFS will provide access to the public while protecting sensitive resources. The project’s natural resources will be inventoried, and a management plan developed within one year. Long-range plans for this property will generally be directed at the perpetuation of natural communities and protection of listed species. An all-season burning program will use existing roads, black lines, foam lines, and natural breaks to contain fires.

Areas of silviculture in the Crystal River project will be returned to their original character and species composition. About 25 percent of the Homosassa Reserve tract contains pasture suitable for reforestation and restoration. The resource inventory will be used to identify sensitive areas and to locate any recreational or administrative facilities. Unnecessary roads, fire lines, and hydrological disturbances will be restored to the greatest extent practical. Infrastructure will be placed in disturbed areas and will be the minimum needed for public access and management.



### *Revenue-generating potential*

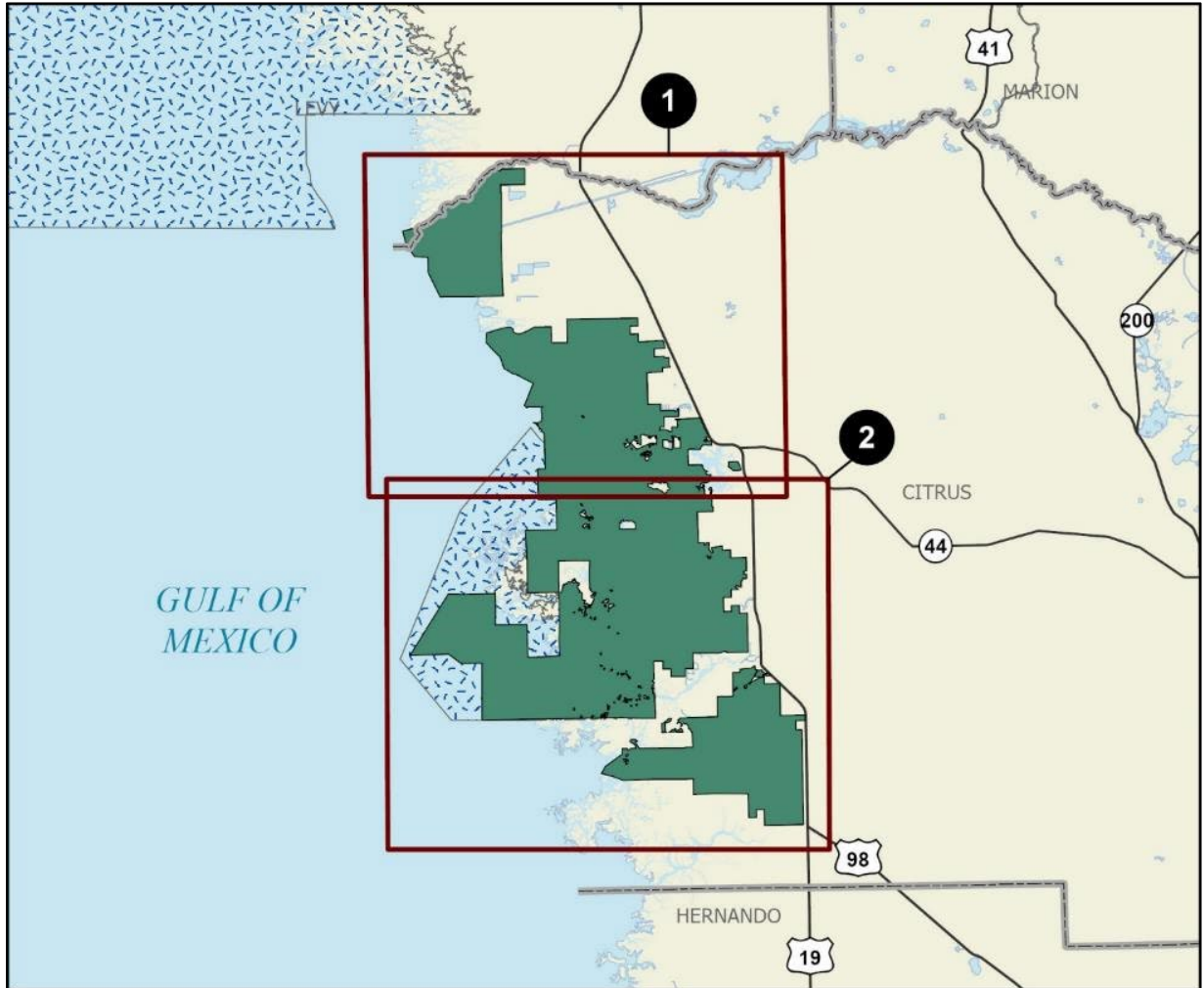
Initially, no revenue is expected to be generated. During restoration of pine plantations, some revenue to offset the cost of management may be generated from the sale of timber. Any estimate of revenue from this harvest depends upon a detailed assessment of the value of the timber. As the recreational component develops and additional staff is assigned, there may be a potential for revenue from this source. No potential revenue estimates are available. On the Homosassa Reserve, the FFS will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide variable revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for this tract is expected to be low.

### *Cooperators in management activities*

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is recommended as a cooperating manager for hunts to eliminate feral hogs and to manage certain species. Because of the proximity of certain parcels to the Cross Florida Greenway and the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge, the Office of Greenways and Trails and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can be cooperative managers on parts of the project.

Citrus County and the City of Crystal River may also cooperate in management.

The FFS will manage the Homosassa Reserve tract as an addition to the Withlacoochee State Forest, and will cooperate with other state agencies, local governments and interested parties as appropriate.

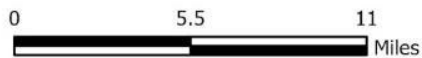


### FLORIDA SPRINGS COASTAL GREENWAY: OVERVIEW

CITRUS COUNTY

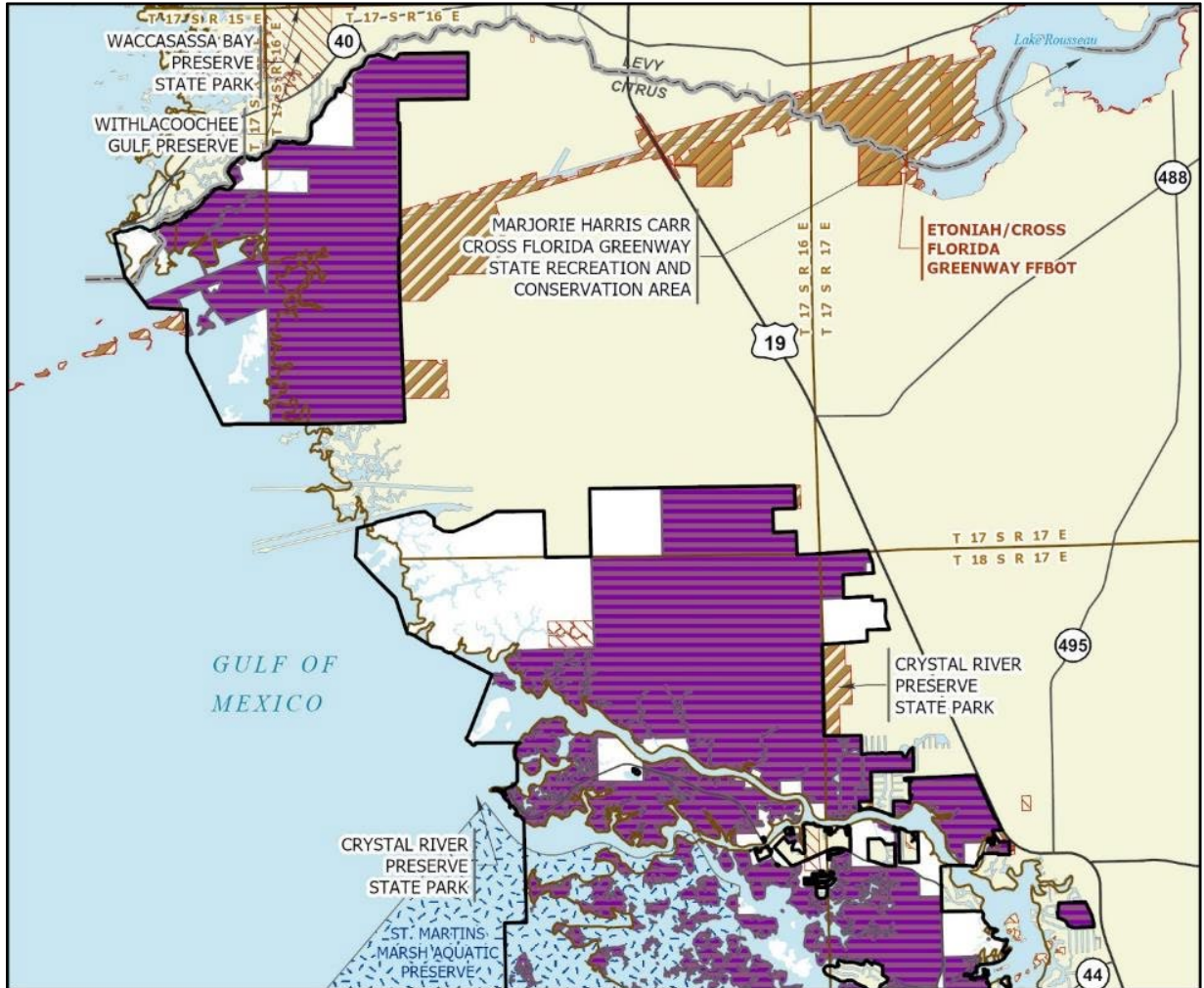


JANUARY 2020



Map 1 : FNAI, January 2021





### FLORIDA SPRINGS COASTAL GREENWAY: MAP 1

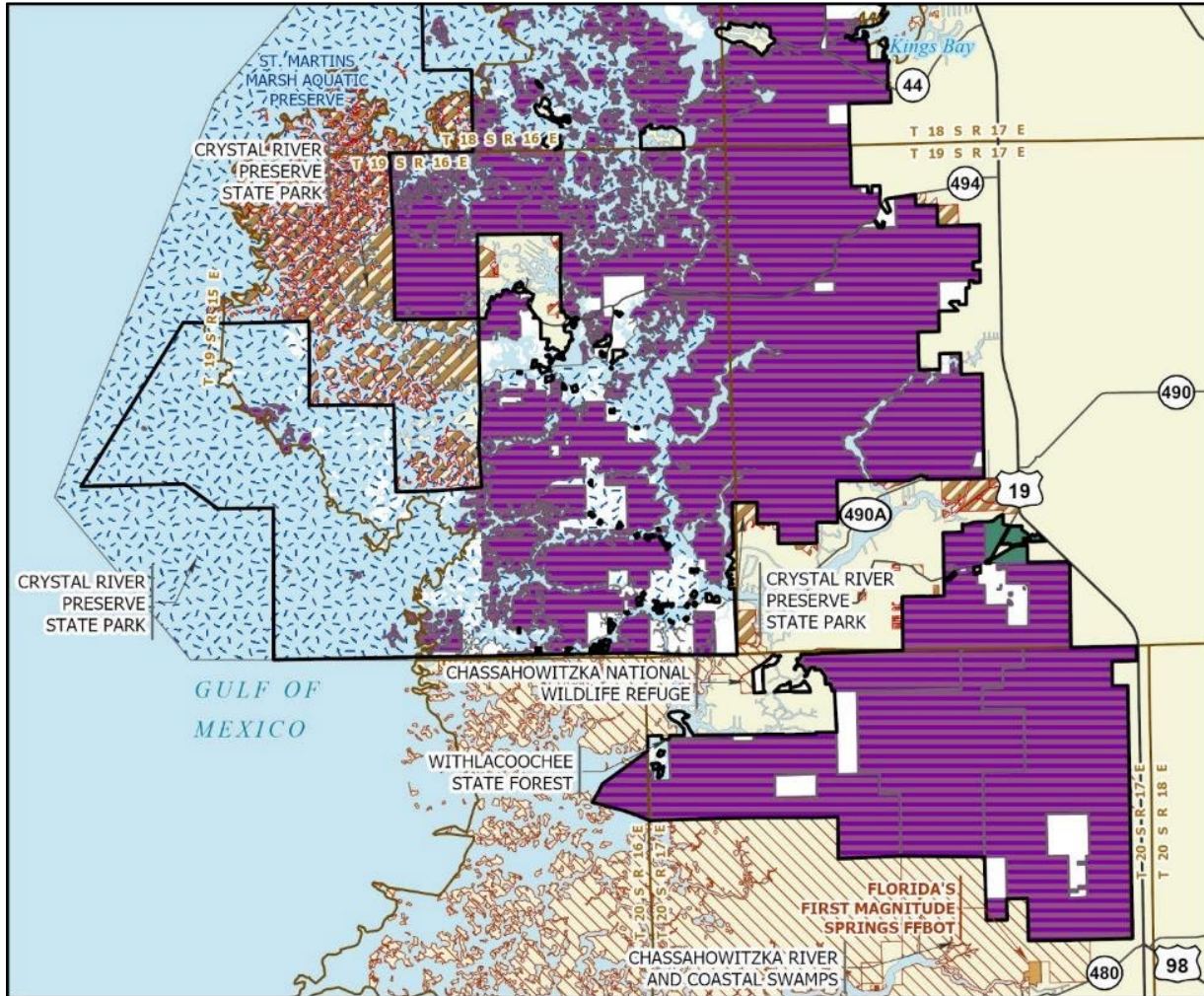
#### CITRUS COUNTY

- Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
- Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
- State Owned Conservation Lands
- Other Conservation Lands
- Other Florida Forever BOT Projects
- State Aquatic Preserve



JANUARY 2020

Map 2 : FNAI, January 2021



### FLORIDA SPRINGS COASTAL GREENWAY: MAP 2

#### CITRUS COUNTY

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



JANUARY 2020

Map 3 : FNAI, January 2021