

Bear Hammock

Critical Natural Lands

Marion County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2008
<i>Project Acres</i>	4,689
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	4,689
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$12,076,756

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Bear Hammock project will provide an important connection between Goethe State Forest and the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway (MHCCFG), helping to create a continuous stretch of over 200,000 acres of conservation land. Located in southern Marion County, this project will enhance coordination of land acquisition efforts by linking conservation lands and preserving rare species habitat. Bear Hammock is known to be habitat for species such as wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) and gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). The property has a high potential to provide recreational trails for hiking, biking and horseback riding, and other recreational activities including camping, picnicking and water access.

General Description

Bear Hammock is in the valley of the Withlacoochee River, near Dunnellon and Brooksville. About two-thirds of the site is covered by pine plantations that were historically a mix of pine flatwoods and sandhill, or scrub, terrain. While slash pines have been planted in most areas, there are also native shrubs that include shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*) and gallberry (*Ilex glabra*). There are several natural lakes on the property, ranging from shallow ponds with abundant aquatic herbs to sandy-bottomed clear water lakes. At least one of these lakes is a sandhill upland lake with no associated swamp.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3

Public Use

Bear Hammock has many potential resource-based recreational opportunities. It is within a few miles of Dunnellon, adjacent to MHCCFG and borders the South Goethe Florida Forever project and Goethe State Forest. This land contains seven lakes. Access to the lakes and rivers would provide canoeing, kayaking, sailing and fishing. The highly scenic areas around the lakes could provide picnicking and wildlife



viewing. The many roads within the property will provide off-road bicycling, hiking and horseback riding opportunities. The expansive trail system that can be supported by the property can also connect with trails and recreational opportunities from other nearby public lands. The property has over 3 miles of access from County Road 40 and County Road 363. This easy access could bolster the project as a full-service recreation area by providing camping, picnicking, hiking, nature study, environmental education and water access. Hunting could also be supported.

Acquisition Planning

2008

In 2008, the project had an estimated tax value of \$32,576,529.

2011

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council placed this project into the Florida Forever category of Critical Natural Lands projects.

Coordination

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is considered an acquisition partner for this project.

Management Policy Statement

The objectives of acquiring Bear Hammock are to conserve and protect the significant Strategic Habitat Conservation Area that makes up almost a quarter of the project area, helping preserve species that are documented on this site, including wood storks, bald eagles, diamondback rattlesnakes and gopher tortoises. Another major goal is to provide public outdoor resource-based recreation.

Manager(s)

FWC is the recommended manager except for a separate island in Lake Rousseau, which would be managed by the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) as part of MHCCFG.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

Bear Hammock will increase the connectivity within the conservation landscape extending from north central peninsular Florida to the Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. If acquired, Bear Hammock would provide considerable restoration and expansion of existing habitat for imperiled species and would advance the goals of species and habitat recovery plans.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

The project requires resource management methods such as prescribed fire where appropriate. FWC would conduct historic vegetation analysis to determine appropriate desired future conditions, objectives and restoration methods. This is especially important for the conservation of habitats and populations of imperiled or rare species.





Potential methods for the perpetuation of less disturbed natural communities include control of human uses, ecological restoration, exotic species removal and prescribed burning, and other important methods for the management and protection of resources. Any suburban development around Bear Hammock could affect certain management actions and uses such as the ability to conduct prescribed burning.

Biotic surveys would be accomplished during the early part of plan development and implementation due to the expected presence of imperiled or rare species. Facilities would be kept to the minimum level necessary to assure protection of the resources and compatible recreational experiences. Any such development would be confined to areas of previous disturbance.

Management Implementation, Public Access, Site security and Protection of Infrastructure

During the first year after acquisition, emphasis would be placed on site security, posting boundaries, public access, fire management, resource inventory and removal of refuse. A management plan would be developed by FWC stating management goals and objectives necessary to implement future resource management, taking into consideration existing conditions and approaches necessary to achieve desired future conditions. The management plan will also establish future roles of cooperating entities including governmental agencies and other stakeholders. Long-range goals would emphasize ecosystem management and the conservation of fish and wildlife.

Revenue-generating Potential

The revenue-generating potential of Bear Hammock is not known and will depend upon future uses to be approved in the management plan. However, revenue from such environmental lands might include forest products production, sales of hunting licenses, fishing licenses, wildlife management area permits, and other special hunting permits and user fees.

Cooperators in Management Activities

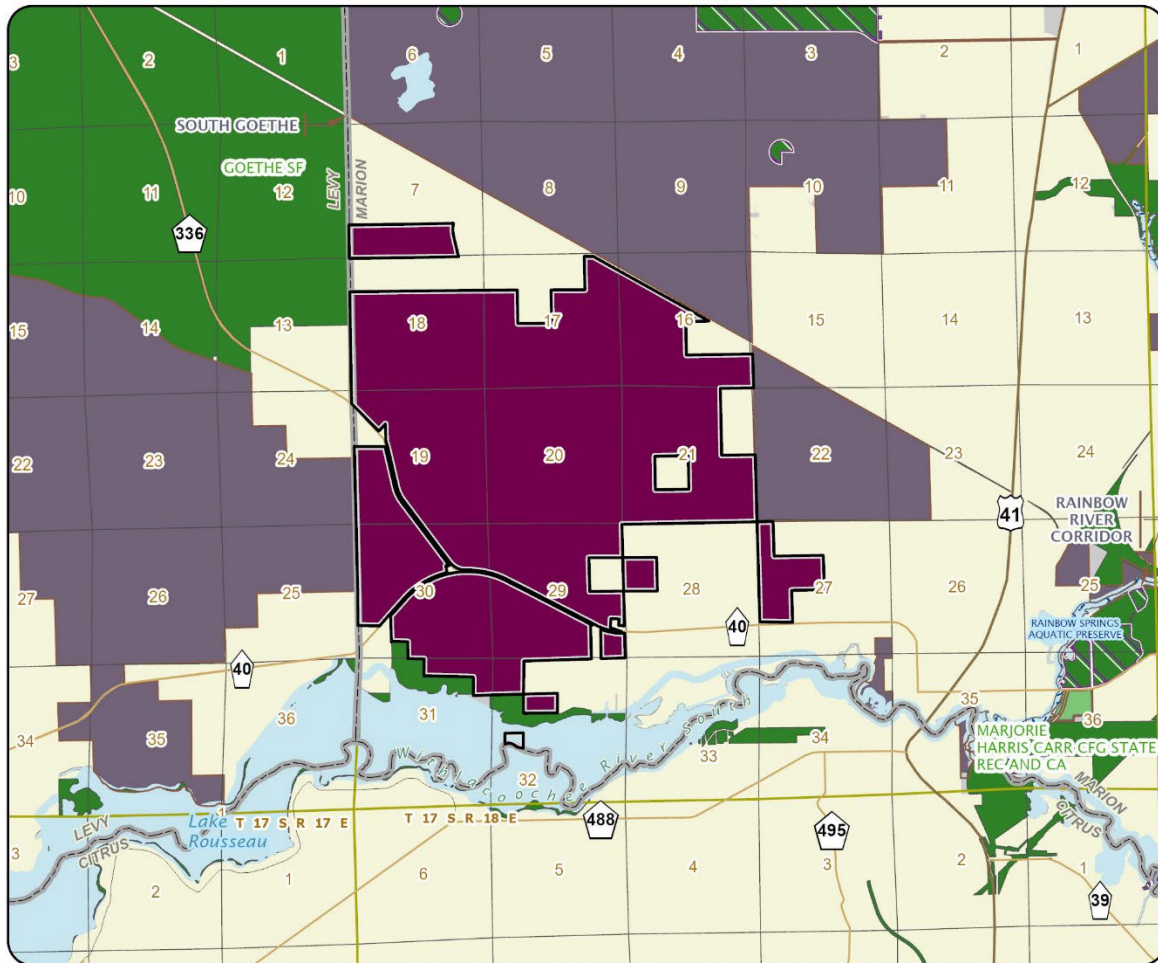
FWC should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies including DEP, the Florida Forest Service and the St. Johns River Water Management District in the management of the property.

Management Cost Summary

FWC	Startup	Recurring
Source	not provided	not provided
Salary	not provided	not provided
OPS	not provided	not provided
Expense	\$217,898	\$88,179
OCO	\$378,630	\$173,518
TOTAL	\$596,619	\$261,697

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





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MARION COUNTY

