

Camp Blanding to Raiford Greenway

Critical Natural Lands

Baker, Bradford, and Clay Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2010
<i>Project Acres</i>	28,583
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	1,742
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	26,841
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$63,831,116

Purpose for State Acquisition

Acquisition of the Camp Blanding to Raiford Greenway project will expand opportunities for outdoor resource-based recreation by establishing landscape connectivity between the lands within Camp Blanding, the Northeast Florida Timberlands Florida Forever project and the Raiford to Osceola Greenway Florida Forever project. A key focus of the project is to permanently link fragmented wildlife habitat and protect the extensive wetland systems and multiple blackwater streams, including the New River and its headwaters.

General Description

The original Camp Blanding-Osceola Greenway Florida Forever project was divided to create two projects that maintain ecological connectivity among existing and proposed conservation lands: Camp Blanding to Raiford Greenway and Raiford to Osceola Greenway. The original project, east of Lake City and north of Gainesville, is in Baker, Bradford and Clay counties. Together, these projects form a continuous conservation corridor that adjoins the Camp Blanding Military Reservation, Osceola National Forest and Northeast Florida Timberlands Florida Forever project. The Camp Blanding to Raiford Greenway Florida Forever project has multiple landowners and will be acquired in fee simple.

The most common community type within the project boundary is mesic flatwoods. Most of these flatwoods are used in silviculture; however, some remain in a relatively natural condition. Sandhill communities total only about 230 acres but have substantial ecological value. The forested wetlands are the least disturbed natural areas. There are several large basin swamps, including Turkey Creek Swamp and New River Swamp. Dome swamps, wet flatwoods and baygalls represent the remaining acreage. Floodplain swamps extend over approximately 4,000 acres of the project area. Several flatwoods lakes and an important blackwater stream (New River) are also present. Physiographic features of interest include the Trail Ridge, the eastern boundary of the Cody Scarp.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Southeastern weasel	G5T4/S3?

Public Use

This project has significant nature-based recreational and educational potential if available to the public. All trails throughout the project have potential for being multiple-use trails with hiking, horseback riding and bicycling. Other recreational opportunities could include camping, picnicking and hunting.

Acquisition Planning

2003

On December 5, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added the Camp Blanding to Osceola Greenway project to Group A of the 2004 Florida Forever Priority List. This fee-simple and less-than-fee project, sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Office of Greenways and Trails and Conservation Florida, consisted of approximately 153,000 acres, multiple ownerships and a taxable value of \$28,508,089. The essential parcels were identified as the Plum Creek and Wachovia ownerships.

2006

On October 13, 2006, ARC approved a redesign to the essential parcels within the project. The number and acreage of essential parcels were revised by removing 106 parcels (64,250 acres) and adding 52 parcels (10,180 acres) which resulted in declassification of 54,070 acres currently designated essential. The new essential parcel configuration retained a narrower greenway connection between Camp Blanding, Raiford Wildlife Management Area and Osceola National Forest.

2010

On June 11, 2010, ARC approved a redesign of the Camp Blanding to Osceola Greenway Florida Forever project that divided and reduced the expansive project into Camp Blanding to Raiford Greenway (33,973 acres) and Raiford to Osceola Greenway (67,673 acres). After the most recent boundary change in 2010, the Camp Blanding to Raiford Greenway project had a historic estimated tax-assessed value of \$92,890,463.

2011

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project in the Critical Natural Lands category.





2018

On October 29, 2018, the North Florida Land Trust purchased a 1,994.1-acre conservation easement, of which 168 acres are in the project boundary.

2024

In September 2024, ARC approved the removal of approximately 5,530.01 acres in Baker County at the landowner's request.

Coordination

Conservation Florida and DEP's Office of Greenways and Trails are acquisition partners on this project.

Management Policy Statement

Areas of the project purchased in fee-simple will be managed to further the long-term protection of the site's plant and wildlife resources, promote sound stewardship of land, timber and water resources, and provide the public with quality resource-based recreational opportunities.

Manager(s)

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are the designated managers.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The project would contribute to a substantial landscape linkage and is a critical component of a conservation corridor extending from central Florida to southeast Georgia. Sizable populations of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and other game species occur within the project and portions of the project are within a designated Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*), Florida mouse (*Peromyscus floridanus*) and striped newt (*Notophthalmus perstriatus*). The project provides habitat for many focal species, which are indicators of natural communities and other wildlife. Most of the project's acreage consists of slash and loblolly pine plantations. Through thinning, the introduction of prescribed fire and sustainable forestry management practices, the project will quickly transform into an area managed for its ecological and recreational benefits rather than its silvicultural uses. The project's size and diversity make it suitable for use and management as a state forest and wildlife management area, contingent upon fee simple acquisition.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

The project contains medium-need tracts that will require up-front resource management, including frequent use of prescribed fire where appropriate. Over half of the project area has disturbed ground cover due to past silviculture. FWC and FFS propose to work cooperatively to assess site management needs and develop the conceptual management plan for the site. Examples of situations that may require cooperative effort include restoring mesic and wet flatwoods previously managed for timber





production; removing or thinning off-site timber species to promote regeneration of native ground covers and appropriate tree species; and reforesting recently harvested areas. The managing agencies will also conduct a historic vegetation analysis to help determine desired future conditions and identify appropriate restoration methods.

Other unified management priorities will include protecting and restoring sensitive wetlands, as well as identifying, controlling and monitoring exotic species. Restoration methods will include the thinning of dense pine stands to decrease canopy cover and increase native ground cover. Recreational trails developed on the parcels could function as fire lines, provide access for prescribed burning equipment and provide an opportunity for wildlife viewing. Infestations of exotic plant species (tung oil tree, air potato, mimosa and others) appear to pose no imminent threat to the ecological integrity of the project; however, there would be surveillance for, and removal of, infestations of exotic invasive species.

Due to the anticipated presence of imperiled or rare species within the project area, resource inventories would be an initial priority under the unified management approach. Environmentally sensitive areas such as erosion-prone sites, listed species habitats, outstanding natural areas and wetlands are to be identified during the initial resource inventory to implement appropriate protective measures. Such inventories are considered vital to unified management planning efforts.

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

During the first year after acquisition, both agencies - operating under the unified management approach - anticipate emphasis on site security, posting boundaries, public access for low-intensity outdoor recreation, fire management, resource inventory and removing trash. Both managing agencies will meet frequently to coordinate task assignments and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local governments and other appropriate participants as it affects management of the project site. Both agencies will participate in specifying area management goals and objectives. Long-term goals would emphasize ecosystem multiple-use management and conserving the site's natural resources including timber, fish and wildlife and water. These goals would include restoring habitat and hydrology and conserving and protecting listed species of flora and fauna.

Following the completion of a plant community inventory and historic vegetation analysis, quantified vegetation management objectives would be developed pursuant to an objective-based vegetation management process. Where practical, disturbed sites would be restored to conditions expected to occur in naturally functioning ecosystems, including re-establishment of species expected to occur naturally on specific sites. Management would emphasize enhancement of abundance and spatial distribution of imperiled or rare species. Essential roads would be stabilized to provide all-weather public access and management operations. Programs providing multiple recreational uses would also be implemented.

Both agencies will work towards the development of a fire management plan that will maximize natural resource protection and enhancement. Where appropriate, timber resources will be managed using





best silvicultural practices. Thinning timber, introducing prescribed fire and sustainable forestry management practices could provide silvicultural products, and ecological and recreational benefits. Archaeological and historic sites would be managed in coordination with the Division of Historical Resources; there are 12 sites in the project area.

Unnecessary roads, fire lanes and hydrological disturbances would be abandoned or restored. The road plan would ensure that the public has appropriate access and sensitive resources are protected. Infrastructure development would be the minimum required to serve the needs of the public, including provisions for facilities necessary for the security and management of the project area.

Revenue-generating Potential

Timber sales would be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions under a multiple-use management concept. Management would seek to improve the other revenue-generating potential of areas currently serving forest products production by improving wildlife diversity and resource-based recreation. Additional revenue would be generated from sales of hunting licenses, fishing licenses, wildlife management area permits and other special hunting permits. Some revenues might be realized in the future from recreational user fees and ecotourism activities if feasible. Fifteen percent of all gross revenues will be returned to the county from which those funds were generated. Both agencies have agreed to a unified management framework whereby all management funds, site generated revenues, and management expenditures are to be evenly divided between FFS and FWC.

Cooperators in Management Activities

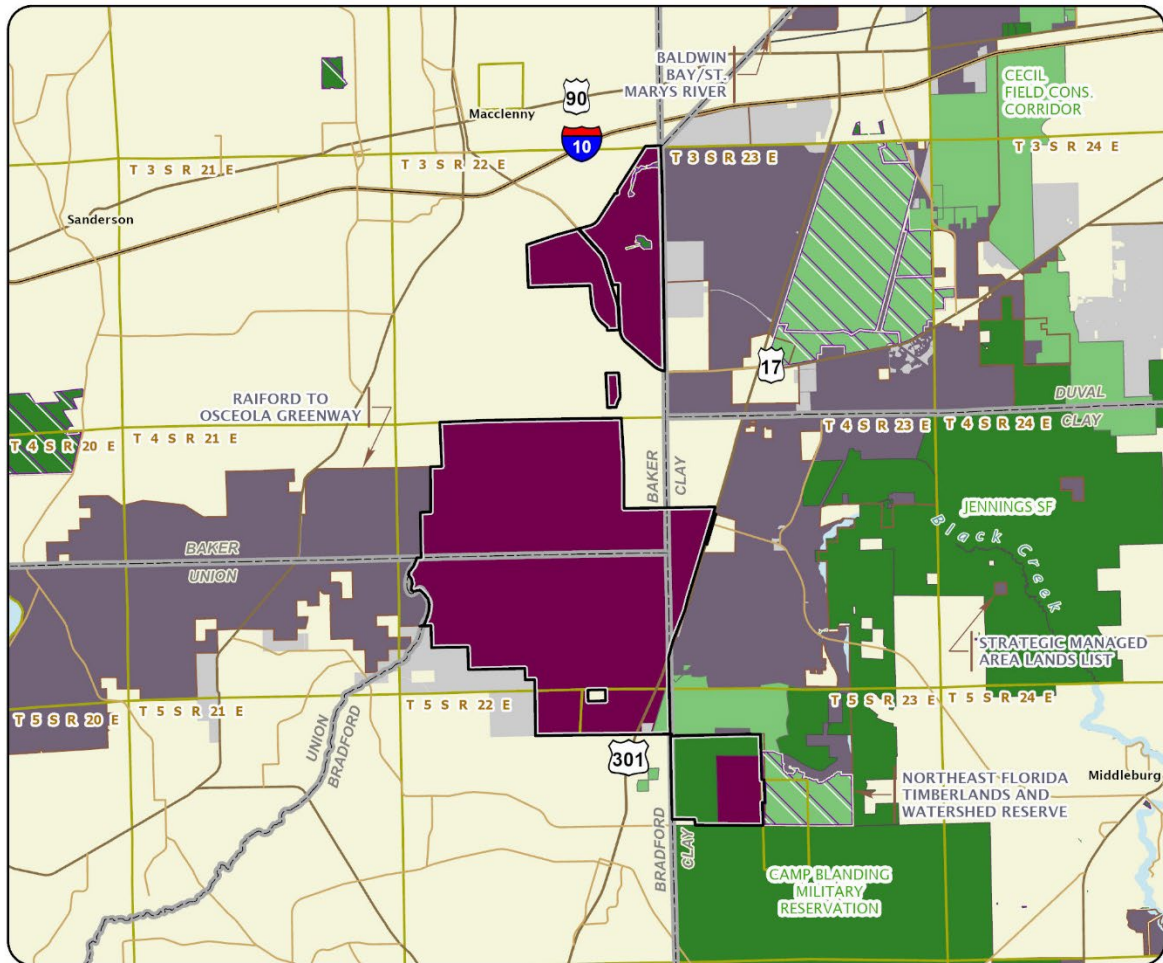
FFS and FWC have agreed to a unified management framework where all management funds, site-generated revenues and management expenditures are evenly divided. The managers should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies, including the Department of Corrections, the St. Johns River Water Management District, State Armory Board, the Suwannee River Water Management District and the U.S. Forest Service in managing the area.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS and FWC</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	not provided	not provided
OPS	not provided	not provided
Expense	\$3,441,310	\$323,273
OCO	\$1,995,010	\$1,035,807
TOTAL	\$5,436,320	\$1,359,080

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





CAMP BLANDING TO RAIFORD GREENWAY

BAKER, BRADFORD, AND CLAY COUNTIES

-  Florida Forever Project Boundary
-  Essential Parcels Remaining
-  Other Florida Forever Projects
-  State Conservation Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Other Public Lands
-  Less-Than-Fee Acquisition

