

Catfish Creek

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Polk County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>1990</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>19,449</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>16,968</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>2,480</i>
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$17,384,006</i>

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Catfish Creek project will conserve a significant portion of the Lake Wales Ridge and a segment of the Lake Pierce shoreline and protect rare Florida scrub that is habitat for many endemic plant and animal species found nowhere else in the world. The project will allow the public to enjoy recreational opportunities compatible with the special habitat and protect an important archaeological site on Lake Pierce.

General Description

Catfish Creek is a diverse natural area extending over high scrub ridges that are interspersed with lakes and next to the pristine shore of Lake Pierce. Natural communities include sandhill, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, xeric hammock, bottomland hardwood forest, basin swamp, sandhill upland lake, wet flatwoods, blackwater stream, seepage slopes and floodplain swamp. The project harbors at least 19 rare species that are state listed as endangered or threatened. Rare or endangered animal species include the wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) and Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*). Additionally, the 1993 addition on Snodgrass Island contains a potentially important archaeological site. Currently, the project is threatened by agriculture and residential development.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida scrub-jay	G1G2/S1S2
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Blue calamintha bee	G1/S1
Morris' tiny sand-loving scarab	G1/S1
Archbold bess beetle	G1G2/S1S2
Archbold cebrionid beetle	G1G2/S1S2
Tough buckthorn bee	G1G2/S1S2
<i>Florida blazing star</i>	G2/S2
<i>Lewton's polygala</i>	G2/S2
<i>scrub buckwheat</i>	G4T2?/S2
Florida sandhill crane	G5T2/S2

Public Use

The project is designated for use as a state preserve, with such uses as hiking, camping, fishing and nature study. The Florida National Scenic Trail, a cross-Florida hiking and non-motorized trail, is also planned to cross the project.

Acquisition Planning

Phases

Phase I (essential): Rolling Meadows (acquired), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) (acquired) and Palo Alto (acquired); Phase II: Imagination Farms, Progress Homes (acquired) and K-Rocker; Phase III: Section two, which is subdivided (state has acquired all of section consolidated by Bowen).

1992

In 1992, TNC acquired 68 acres in the project.

1993

On November 11, 1993, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added 13 acres to the project boundary.

1999

On October 21, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council added 6,991 acres that were designated as essential to the project boundary.

2002

On August 15, 2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added the Rolling Meadows Ranch (2,045 acres) to the project boundary.

On December 5, 2002, ARC added the K-Rocker Tract (3,170 acres) to the project boundary.

2003

On December 5, 2003, ARC moved the project to Group B of the Florida Forever Priority List.

2007

TNC donated 68 acres (which were acquired in 1992) to the state.





2008

On November 25, 2008, TNC and Hatchineha Ranch, LLC acquired Hatchineha Ranch (2,057 acres).

2011

On December 9, 2011, ARC moved the project to the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

2012

On January 18, 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service established the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area with a 10-acre donation of Hatchineha Ranch from TNC.

2015

In February 2015, the United States of America purchased 1,097.2 acres in the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area from TNC.

2016

On December 21, 2016, the United States of America acquired Hatchineha Ranch Conservation Bank (351.03 acres) conservation easement in the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, to be managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

2023

In October 2023, ARC removed approximately 44 acres from the project boundary that were deemed unsuitable for state acquisition.

Coordination

TNC sponsored the project, assisted in the preparation of the project and held discussions with some of the major landowners. TNC and the South Florida Water Management District are considered acquisition partners for the project.

Management Policy Statement

The primary management goals of the Catfish Creek project are conserving and protecting environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of the state or a larger geographic area. Also, the project can conserve and protect significant habitat for native or imperiled species, provide recreational opportunities and preserve significant archaeological or historical sites.

Manager(s)

The Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Recreation and Parks will manage the project (except the portion known as Snodgrass Island).

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The sensitive resources in the Catfish Creek project—sandhills, a large lake and high-quality scrub with its rare species—qualify it as a state preserve.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

The project is a low-need management area emphasizing resource protection while allowing compatible public recreational use and development.





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

Within the first year after acquisition, management activities will concentrate on site security, natural and cultural resource protection and the development of a plan for long-term public use and resource management.

Revenue-generating Potential

No significant revenue is expected to be generated initially. After acquisition, it will probably be several years before any significant public use facilities are developed. The amount of any revenue generated will depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities. With emphasis on resource protection, and with minimal public use, future generated revenues are not expected to be high.

Cooperators in Management Activities

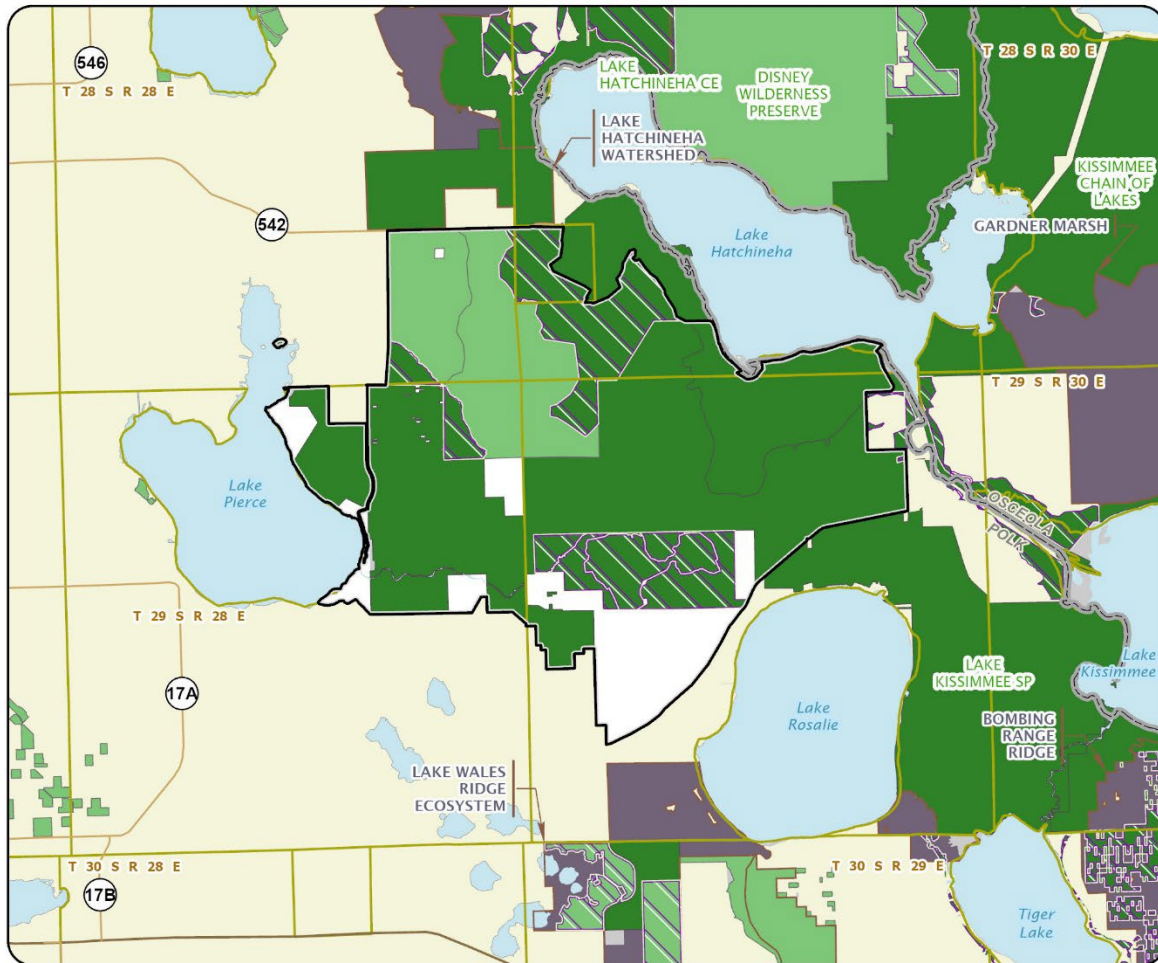
No cooperative managers are identified.

Management Cost Summary

<u>DRP</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	not provided
Salary	\$22,167	not provided
OPS	\$0	not provided
Expense	\$5,712	not provided
OCO	\$6,978	not provided
FCO	\$8,640	not provided
TOTAL	\$43,497	not provided

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





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