

# Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Charlotte and Lee Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1992
<i>Project Acres</i>	23,652
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	17,245
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	6,406
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$74,261,580

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project will protect an area with some of the largest and highest-quality slash pine flatwoods left in southwest Florida and connect the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park with the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area, thus supporting the management of these areas and protecting the water quality of the Gasparilla Sound-Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve.

## General Description

This project encompasses the largest remaining tract of intact pine flatwoods in southwestern Florida. The old-growth south Florida slash pine forests within the project are home to at least ten rare animals including the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) and Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*). The tract also provides important habitat for several rare plants, including the critically imperiled beautiful pawpaw (*Deeringothamnus pulchellus*). The project provides additional protection for the Outstanding Florida Waters of the Gasparilla Sound-Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve and will connect the Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park and the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area. This upland site is particularly suited for development, especially considering the rapid growth of Charlotte and Lee counties. No archaeological sites are known from the project.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Red-cockaded woodpecker	G3/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Florida panther	G5T1/S1
<i>beautiful pawpaw</i>	G2/S2
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Florida kingsnake	G2/S2
<i>Florida beargrass</i>	G3/S3
Wood stork	G4/S2
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
Roseate spoonbill	G5/S2

**Public Use**

The project is designated as a wildlife management area, with such uses as hiking, environmental education and hunting.

**Acquisition Planning**

**Phase I**

Phase I tracts include Ansin (essential - acquired), Zemel (essential - Phase I acquired), Bower (essential), Section 20 SE of Burnt Store Marina Road and Section 24.

**1995**

On July 14, 1995, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added 135 acres to the project.

**1998**

On October 15, 1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council removed 165 acres from the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods and added it to the Charlotte Harbor Estuary project (then called Charlotte Harbor) as part of a 490-acre increase of that project.

**1999**

On February 11, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council added 333 acres.

On October 21, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council added 1,793 acres as essential parcels.

**2007**

In June 2007, the 9-acre Honenberg Parcel was purchased by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and added to the Yucca Pens Unit of the project.

**2008**

On December 12, 2008, the project boundary was modified to exclude the Zrev Farm, LLC property (2,410 acres) per private citizen request.





## **2009**

On February 26, 2009, FWC purchased 37.63 acres (Yucca Pens) for \$298,000 from Allcoat, Inc. to add to Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area.

On June 12, 2009, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) approved removal of 3,035 acres (2,352 of ZREV at the owner's request and 683 isolated/disturbed acres) from the boundary with a tax assessed value of \$43,524,121.

## **2010**

On February 19, 2010, ARC added approximately 50 acres to the project boundary. These acres were moved from the Charlotte Harbor Estuary project to this project.

## **2011**

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category.

## **2014**

On August 15, 2014, ARC approved adding Bond Ranch to the project. This increased the boundary by 670 acres and will help restore sheet-flow conditions in south Charlotte County.

## **2016**

On October 21, 2016, ARC approved the 557-acre Hog Branch/Bear Branch proposal as a new Florida Forever project with a tax assessed value of \$837,602. This area is east of Burnt Store Road in Charlotte County. This is part of an effort to restore traditional sheet flow of water in Charlotte County that was disrupted over the years by the roadbeds for railroads and highways, which flooded areas in adjoining Lee County and degraded the tidal creeks that are important to snook, redfish and tarpon. After approving this for Florida Forever, ARC then added these lands to the boundary of Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project.

## **2019**

On June 14, 2019, ARC approved the addition of 142-acres to the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Florida Forever project located in Charlotte County with a 2019 tax assessed value of \$593,013. This amendment was called the Charlotte 580 amendment and proposed to be acquired in fee simple. It will provide water to the Yucca Pens area. The land within the approved boundary was designated essential. It would be managed by FWC if acquired.

On October 18, 2019, ARC approved adding the 2,752-acre (GIS) Stolle Ranch project proposed for fee simple acquisition in Charlotte and Lee counties to the 2020 Florida Forever Priority List, then moved to incorporate the lands within the Stolle Ranch project boundary into the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project boundary. The proposal had a 2019 tax assessed value of \$6,954,550. The proposal connects two managed areas. Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area is contiguous with the north and northwest boundaries of the property, and Prairie Pines Preserve is located immediately southwest of the I-75 corridor contributing to both connectivity as well as enhancing wildlife habitat.





## **2020**

In 2020, six parcels [Kaiser, Spreen (one parcel each); Willden, Slagle (two parcels each)] within the Yucca Pens Unit were acquired containing 338.42 acres at a cost of \$652,500. The parcels will be managed by FWC as part of the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area.

In March 2020, FWC acquired a 5-acre parcel from Bear Investments, LLC at a cost of \$13,400. The parcel was acquired using Florida Forever funds and will be managed as part of Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area.

## **2021**

In 2021, the Department of Environmental Protection acquired 205.24 acres in fee simple within the Yucca Pens Unit from Jefferson Parnell. The property will be managed by FWC as part of the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area.

### Coordination

FWC is acquiring small inholdings in the project.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project are to: conserve and protect significant habitat for native and imperiled species; conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems to enhance or protect significant natural resources; and provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural resource-based recreation.

### Manager(s)

FWC is the recommended manager.

### Management Prospectus

#### **Qualifications for State Designation**

The Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods project meets the qualifications of a wildlife management area. This is due to the project's size (more than 18,000 acres), location (adjacent to the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area), outstanding wildlife habitat (the largest stand of undisturbed flatwoods in southwest Florida) and wildlife resources (red-cockaded woodpecker, Florida panther and Florida black bear, among others).

#### **Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

Development, both surrounding and within the project, and the intense urbanization of southwest Florida suggest a broad array of management problems. Trash dumping, other illegal trespass and the presence of numerous inholdings will certainly increase the need for intensive and careful management. Law enforcement and fire control issues are expected to be at the forefront.

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

The first year of management activity will entail controlling public access with gates and/or fencing and controlling the littering and dumping problems. Additional emphasis will be placed on planning and on





establishing an adequate and appropriate fire regime. Subsequent years should result in this project becoming an integral part of the management scheme for Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area.

**Revenue-generating Potential**

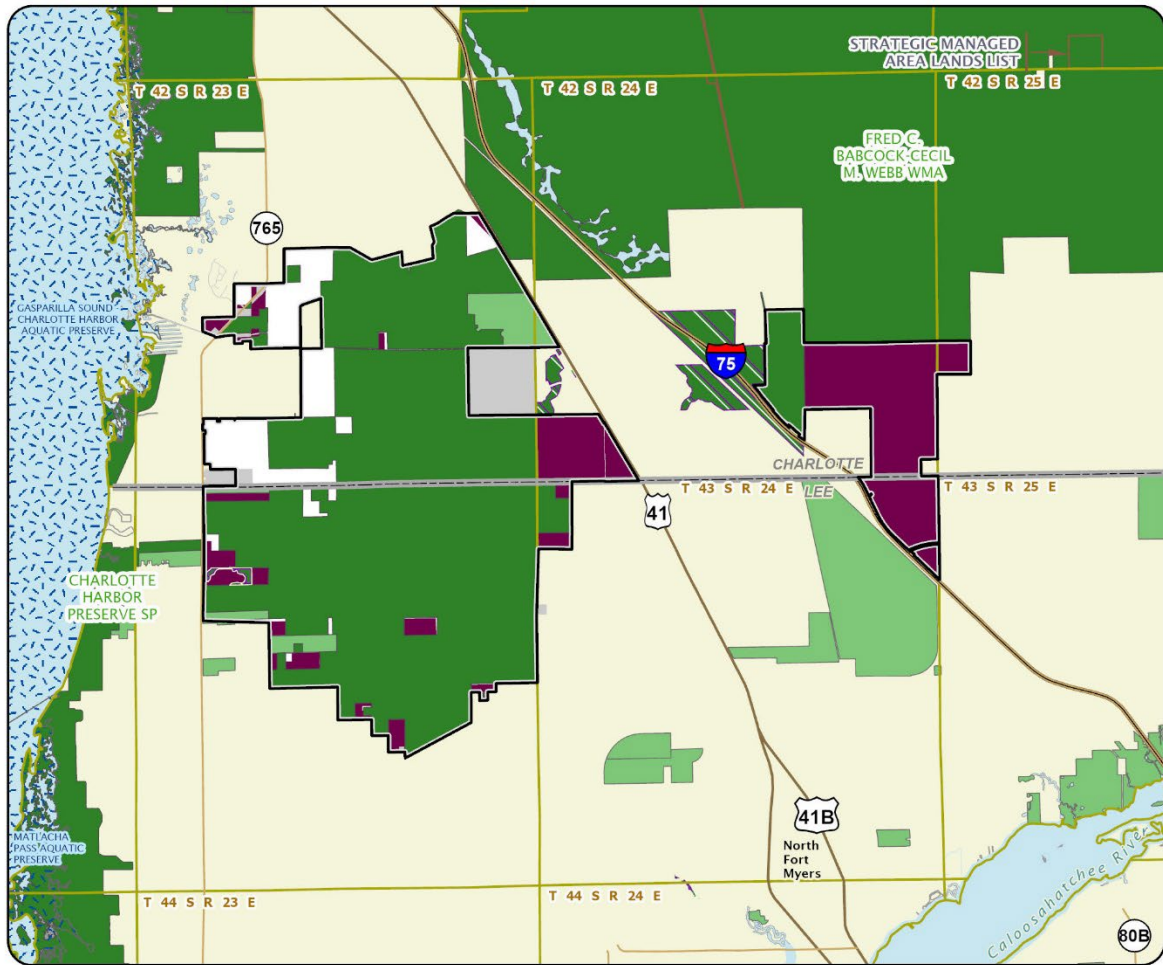
Though this property contains significant timber resources, the timber revenue potential is low. There is little or no market for timber in Southwest Florida (particularly south Florida slash pine). Nevertheless, the potential for generating recreational revenue would be significant if new recreational user fees were to be implemented in this wildlife management area.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>CARL 1996/1997</u>	<u>CARL 1997/1998</u>
Salary	\$54,200	\$54,200
OPS	\$0	\$0
Expense	\$10,000	\$10,000
OCO	\$0	\$0
FCO	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$64,200	\$64,200

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





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