

Conlin Lake X

Less-Than-Fee

Osceola County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2015
<i>Project Acres</i>	9,075
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	5,553
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	3,522
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$5,262,923

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Conlin Lake X project will support the state’s water quality and quantity by preserving the natural functions of the land, surface waters and wetlands associated with Lake Conlin. The project will protect biodiversity at the species, natural community and landscape levels and increase natural resource-based public recreation opportunities in this fast-developing region of Florida.

General Description

Nine miles east of the City of St. Cloud is the Conlin Lake X project, which features a well-maintained basin swamp and the 1,000-acre meandered, freshwater Lake Conlin owned by the state. This sovereign lake was formerly used by Mercury Marine for developing and testing motorboats. The project is bordered by Deseret Ranch to the north and east, Birchwood Acres Limited Partnership on the south, and Bay Lake Ranch Subdivision to the west. Important nearby conservation areas include the Lake Lizzie Conservation Area, Triple N Ranch Wildlife Management Area, Herky Huffman/Bull Creek Wildlife Management Area and Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. The Big Bend Swamp/Holopaw Ranch Florida Forever project abuts the southern boundary of the project and the Osceola Pines Florida Forever project is seven miles to the south. The property is a high-quality, well-managed mosaic of uplands and wetlands surrounding the large, mostly undeveloped Lake Conlin. The project is dominated by large cypress swamps, intermixed with mesic pine flatwoods (including scrubby and wet flatwoods) dotted with smaller dome swamps and depression marshes. The property surrounds Lake Conlin and is bisected by a 2,215-acre basin swamp that serves as the eastern floodplain of the lake. The lake border is undeveloped except for a small area of pasture and facilities on its southwestern side. Lake Conlin is reported to be in good health regarding water quality and natural biota. Species documented on-site include sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), southern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*) and Bachman’s sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*).





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Bachman's sparrow	G3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Southeastern fox squirrel	G5T5/S3
Colonial Wading Bird Colony	G5/SNRB

Public Use

The Conlin Lake X project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. However, the manager currently provides environmental education classes to students at Osceola County schools and week-long camp opportunities for at-risk children during the summer. These activities are expected to continue if this property is acquired as less-than-fee.

Acquisition Planning

2015

On June 19, 2015, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) voted to add this property to the Florida Forever Priority List in the Less-than-Fee category. The owner is anticipating selling an easement on this parcel as one transaction. The entire acreage would be designated as essential. The project had an estimated tax assessed value of \$33,907,500.

2017

On December 6, 2017, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) established Lake X conservation easements (5,500.47 acres).

Coordination

There are no acquisition partners at this time.

Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, the project would be managed for conservation purposes by the landowners as outlined in the conservation easement.

Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm conservation easement compliance would be coordinated by the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of State Lands.

Management Prospectus

DEP's Division of State Lands will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner.

Qualifications for State Designation

Protection of the Conlin Lake X project would contribute to the goals of protecting imperiled species, natural floodplains, surface waters and groundwater recharge sites. The project would also help to form a corridor to the Big Bend Swamp/Holopaw Ranch project.

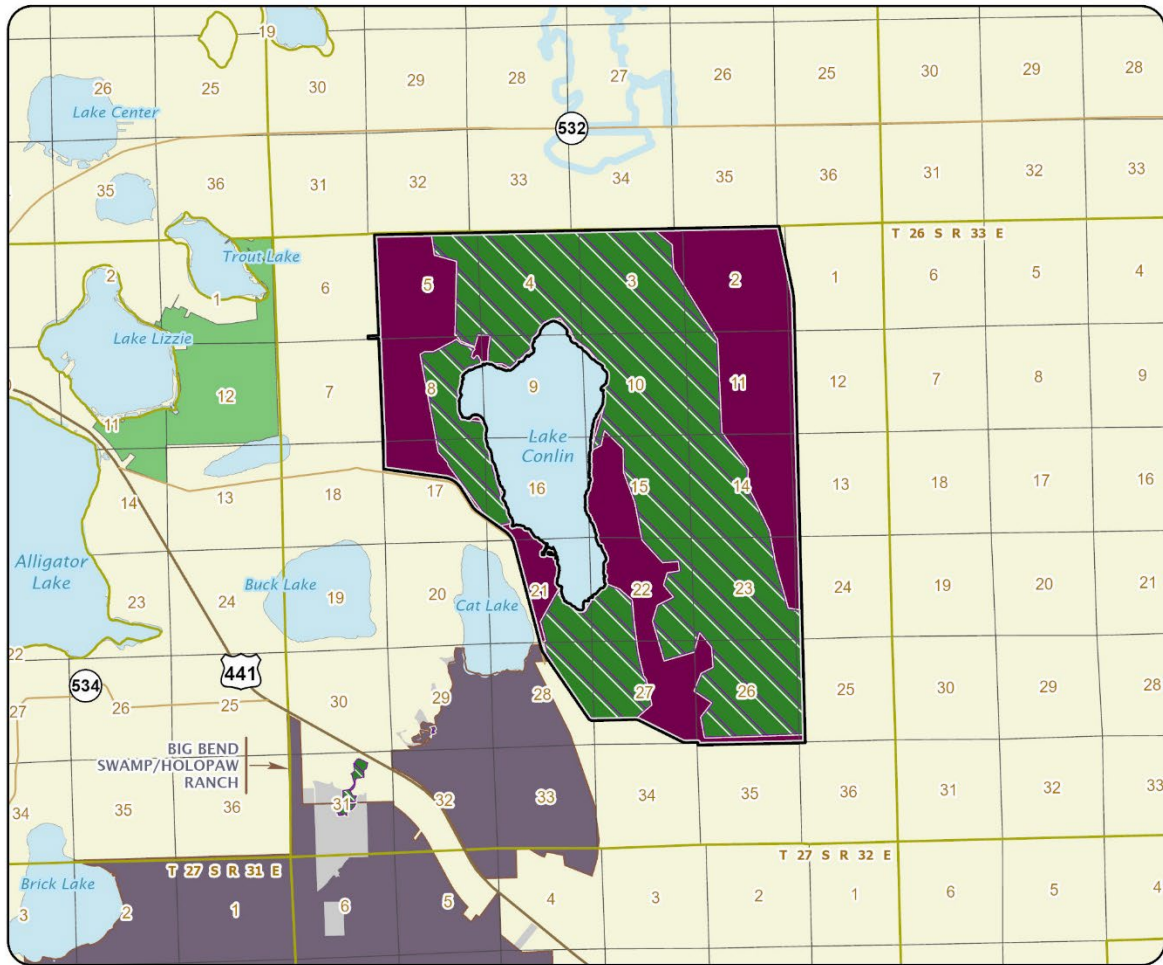




Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Due to a long history of no cattle grazing, limited public use and an ecological focus of land management, the field review showed that most of the natural communities within the project area are in good to outstanding condition. Frequent prescribed fire (on a two-year rotation) with a focus on growing season burns has resulted in a healthy herbaceous layer. The property is also often used as a site for native seed collection. Invasive plants were found to be under control.





CONLIN LAKE X

OSCEOLA COUNTY

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

