

# Half Circle L Ranch

Critical Natural Lands  
Collier and Hendry Counties

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <i>Year Added to Priority List</i>            | 2003         |
| <i>Project Acres</i>                          | 11,182       |
| <i>Acquired Acres</i>                         | 0            |
| <i>Remaining Project Acres</i>                | 11,182       |
| <i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i> | \$48,366,708 |

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Half Circle L Ranch project will protect the primary habitat zone for the Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*). The project will complement the ongoing conservation efforts in this region of the state for imperiled species, restore the habitat and hydrology of disturbed areas and provide public recreation compatible with resource protection.

## General Description

Half Circle L Ranch adjoins the southern boundary of the Devil’s Garden Florida Forever project, the southwestern boundary of the Dinner Island Wildlife Management Area, and the southeastern boundary of the Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest/Okaloacoochee Slough Wildlife Management Area in Collier and Hendry counties. The dominant communities on the property are basin and depression marshes, wet prairies, hydric and mesic hammocks and wet and mesic flatwoods. Almost half of the project has been converted to improved pasture, row crops and citrus.

According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, the project area is home to several rare species. More than 60 percent of the lands within the Half Circle L Ranch project proposal are designated as Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. A majority of the site is classified as a Primary Zone for Florida panther and Florida black bear. The remainder of the site is identified as a Secondary Zone for panther habitat (buffer areas for dispersing cats or areas that could be converted to Primary Zone status with restoration) by the Panther Subgroup of the Multispecies/Ecosystem Recovery Implementation Team. Radio telemetry studies have confirmed panther use of the site.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

| <b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>     | <b><u>Score</u></b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Florida panther                 | G5T1/S1             |
| Florida black bear              | G5T4/S4             |
| Florida sandhill crane          | G5T2/S2             |
| <i>narrow-leaved strap fern</i> | G4G5/S1             |
| Florida burrowing owl           | G4T3/S3             |
| Crested caracara                | G5/S2               |
| <i>hand fern</i>                | G4/S3               |
| White ibis                      | G5/S4               |

**Public Use**

Due to its extensive wetlands, the project is limited in its ability to provide recreational opportunities. Hiking and horseback trails would be traversable in limited dry season conditions. In upland sites, the project can potentially accommodate camping, picnicking, wildlife observation and environmental education. Depending on management emphasis, hunting can also be supported.

**Acquisition Planning**

**2002**

The project consists of 11,182 acres, multiple parcels and two owners. The 2002 tax assessed/taxable value was \$2,811,833.00.

**2003**

On June 6, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added this project to the A List of the Florida Forever projects.

**2004**

In 2004, ARC moved this project to the B List of the Florida Forever projects.

**2011**

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

**Coordination**

This project is adjacent to OSSF and Dinner Island Wildlife Management Area. The Panther Glades and Devil’s Garden Florida Forever projects are also adjacent to the site.

**Management Policy Statement**

The primary land management goal for the project is to restore, maintain and protect native ecosystems in perpetuity; to integrate compatible human use; and to ensure long-term viability of rare species populations. An ecosystem approach will guide the management activities on this project.

**Manager(s)**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is the designated lead manager for the project.





## Management Prospectus

### **Qualifications for State Designation**

The project's size and diversity make it desirable for use and management as part of Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest or Dinner Island Wildlife Management Area. Management is contingent upon the state obtaining legal public access to the site and acquiring fee simple title to the property. Major communities represented on this project include swale, slough, basin marsh, depression marsh, wet prairie, strand swamp, dome swamp, hammock, mesic and wet flatwoods. These community types are consistent with the adjacent state forest and wildlife management area.

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

Much of the project's drier natural community types have been disturbed; many have been converted to some improved form of agriculture. This conversion usually means some type of hydrologic alteration has occurred. This property contains vast areas of wetlands with sensitive natural resources; accordingly, land management and public use will be structured to improve and protect these areas. The level of management intensity and related management costs is expected to initially be high to obtain the necessary information and resources to restore and manage this system as a part of Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest or Dinner Island Wildlife Management Area.

Once this information is obtained and the resources are available, long-term management costs are expected to be moderate. FWC reports that wildlife habitat values and habitat restoration on the semi-improved pasture and native range areas could be improved and potentially restored by removing cattle grazing and utilizing prescribed fire.

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

Restoration of the natural communities on this project will be a priority. Initial or intermediate management efforts will concentrate on resource inventory, restoration planning, fire management and planning, site security, public access and removal of exotic species. The inventory of the site's natural resources and threatened and endangered flora and fauna will be conducted to provide the basis for formulation of management goals. Restoration efforts will focus on water flow alterations, ditching, agriculture improvements to the land, and perpetuating natural communities that have historically been changed. Steps will be taken to ensure that the public is provided appropriate access while also affording protection of sensitive resources. Public use will be limited to activities that will have little or no impact on these areas. Long-range goals will emphasize ecosystem management and the protection and management of threatened and endangered species. Essential roads will be stabilized to provide all-weather public access and management operations. Programs providing multiple recreational uses will also be implemented. An all-season prescribed burning management plan will be developed and implemented using appropriate guidelines. Management activities will strive to manage natural plant communities to benefit native wildlife resources. Archaeological and historic sites will be managed in coordination with the Department of State's Division of Historical Resources.





**Revenue-generating Potential**

Timber sales will be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will primarily take place in pine stands and will provide a variable source of revenue. Because of the existing condition of the timber resource on the property, revenue generating potential of this project is expected to be low. Additional revenue would be generated from sales of hunting licenses, fishing licenses, wildlife management area stamps and other special hunting stamps. Some revenues might be realized in the future from ecotourism activities, which can be economically developed.

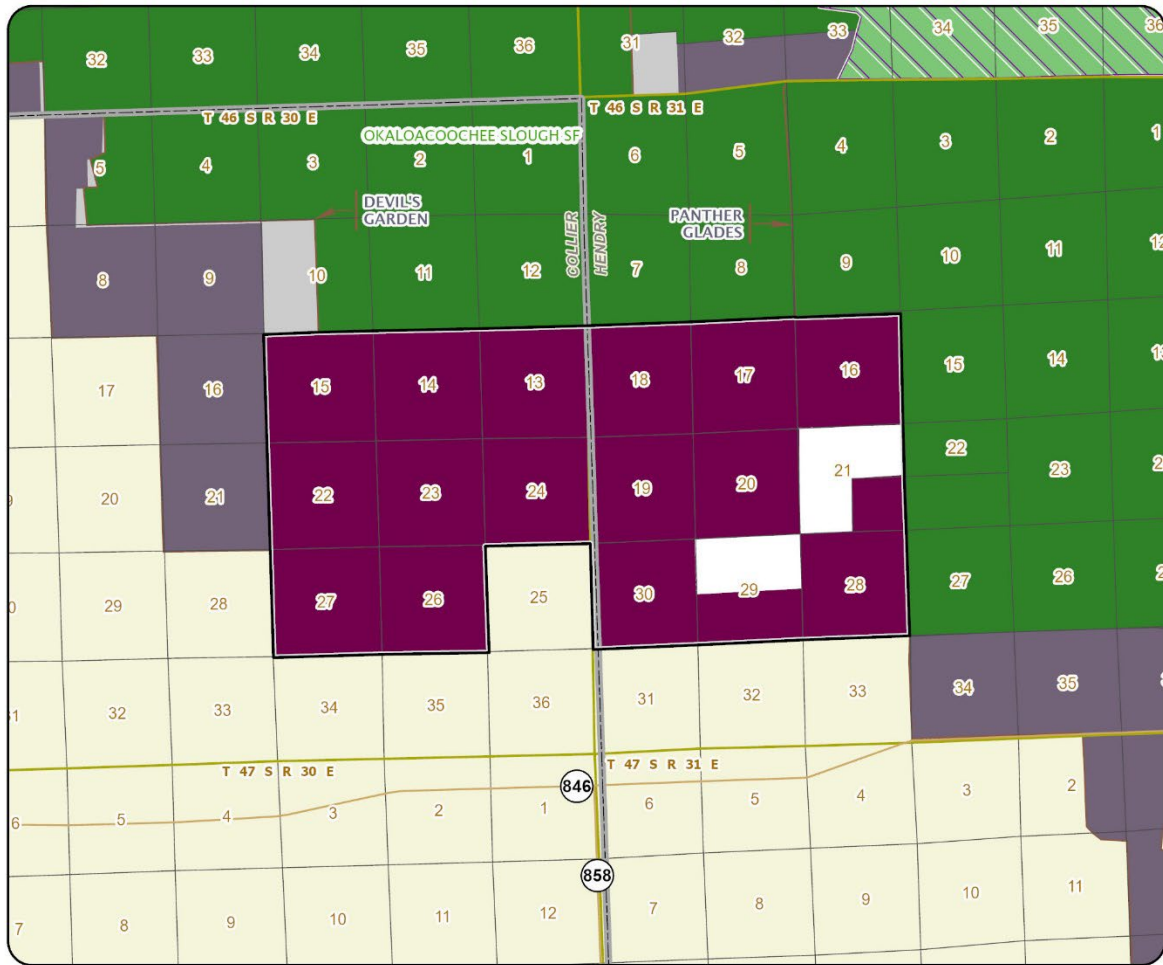
Florida Forever capital project expenditures will be needed on this parcel for hydrological restoration, public access and public use. This management prospectus is not intended to be an application for capital project expenditure; however, as more information is gathered and an analysis of the site is completed, an application may be submitted for capital project expenditure funds. It is anticipated that some of the existing roads will be used as multi-use trails for hiking, horseback riding and off-road bicycling. Management funding will come from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund or its successor.

Management Cost Summary

| <u>FWC</u>      | <u>Startup</u> | <u>Recurring</u> |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Source of Funds | CARL           | not provided     |
| Salary (2 FTE)  | \$70,751       | not provided     |
| OPS             | \$0            | not provided     |
| Expense         | \$261,372      | not provided     |
| OCO             | \$300,600      | not provided     |
| TOTAL           | \$632,723      | not provided     |

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### HALF CIRCLE L RANCH

#### COLLIER AND HENDRY COUNTIES

