

# Hosford Chapman's Rhododendron Protection Zone

Less-Than-Fee

Gadsden and Liberty Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2002
<i>Project Acres</i>	6,707
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	715
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	5,991
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$21,707,473

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Hosford Chapman's Rhododendron Protection Zone will preserve habitat for one of only two core populations of the rare Chapman's Rhododendron (*Rhododendron chapmanii*), which is a federally listed plant that is endemic to only Gulf, Gadsden and Liberty counties. The western portion of the project would cover about 70 percent of the known Hosford area's Chapman's Rhododendron. The project, which is also located within a priority ecological greenway, would augment the value of the Lake Talquin State Forest and support resource-based recreational opportunities. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission identifies this area as potential habitat for numerous rare and imperiled species.

## General Description

This project adjoins the Lines Tract of the Lake Talquin State Forest on the northwest side of Lake Talquin. The Wakulla Unit of the Apalachicola National Forest is approximately two miles south of this site. Roughly half of this site was historically flatwoods. However, most of this has been converted to pine plantations, with nearly 75 percent of the site now cultivated as such. Approximately 15 percent of the site is pine flatwoods. The project also has about 1,414 acres of functioning wetlands that would be protected by this project.

### FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>Chapman's rhododendron</i>	G1/S1
<i>canebrake Sedge</i>	G3G4/S1
<i>zigzag silkgrass</i>	G3/S3
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3

## Public Use

The Hosford Chapman's Rhododendron Protection Zone is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. However, upon coordination with the landowner, the project has the





potential for a variety of forest-related activities. Currently, the property is within the Robert Brent Wildlife Management Area, which is open to hunting, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding and nature-appreciation activities.

### Acquisition Planning

#### **2002**

On June 6, 2002, the Hosford Chapman's Rhododendron Protection Zone project was added to Group B of the 2002 Florida Forever Priority List. The essential parcel is the St. Joe Timberlands and Blairwoods tract which makes the connection to the Lake Talquin State Forest (3,249 acres).

On October 24, 2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) approved the addition of 3,648 acres to the project boundary, bringing the project total to 6,923 acres. This addition formed the connection from the Lake Talquin State Forest to the Apalachicola National Forest.

#### **2011**

On December 9, 2011, the project was placed in the Less-than-Fee category.

#### **2024**

In December 2024, ARC approved the removal of approximately 216.88 acres in Gadsden County from the project boundary.

On December 27, 2024, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) acquired, in fee, 701.1 acres in Gadsden County from Blairwoods, Inc.

### Coordination

The Nature Conservancy and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory are considered acquisition partners. No alternative funding sources have been identified for the project.

### Management Policy Statement

As a less-than-fee acquisition, Hosford Chapman's Rhododendron Protection Zone would be managed by the landowner as outlined in the conservation easement.

### Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of Hosford Chapman's Rhododendron Protection Zone would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm continued conservation easement compliance would be coordinated by DEP's 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

The major communities represented on this site are flatwoods and sandhills. The project's location and diversity make it desirable as an addition to the Lake Talquin State Forest. Its management will depend





upon the level of title acquired by the Board of Trustees. The highest level of protection for the rare species would be accomplished by fee simple acquisition. Parcels acquired in fee simple would be added to the state forest, contingent on obtaining some level of public access to the site.

**Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

Portions of the project have been disturbed and will require restoration. Management on these sites would be structured toward creating optimal conditions for the propagation of rhododendrons. This would preclude more intensive restoration, such as some types of mechanical understory control and site preparation. If acquired, certain types of public use may be reduced in the most sensitive areas of the project. Additionally, water resource development projects, stormwater management projects and any linear facilities are considered incompatible with this project.

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

If acquired less-than-fee, management and public use will be consistent with the terms of each conservation easement. Initial and intermediate management efforts will concentrate on site security, public access, fire management, resource inventory, reforestation of areas where off-site species have been harvested, natural regeneration of native species and any restoration activity. Steps will be taken to ensure that the public is provided access while also protecting sensitive resources.

**Revenue-generating Potential**

Timber sales will be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystems. These sales will primarily take place in upland pine stands and provide a variable source of revenue. Due to the existing condition of the timber resource on this property, the revenue potential of this project is expected to be medium.

**Cooperators in Management Activities**

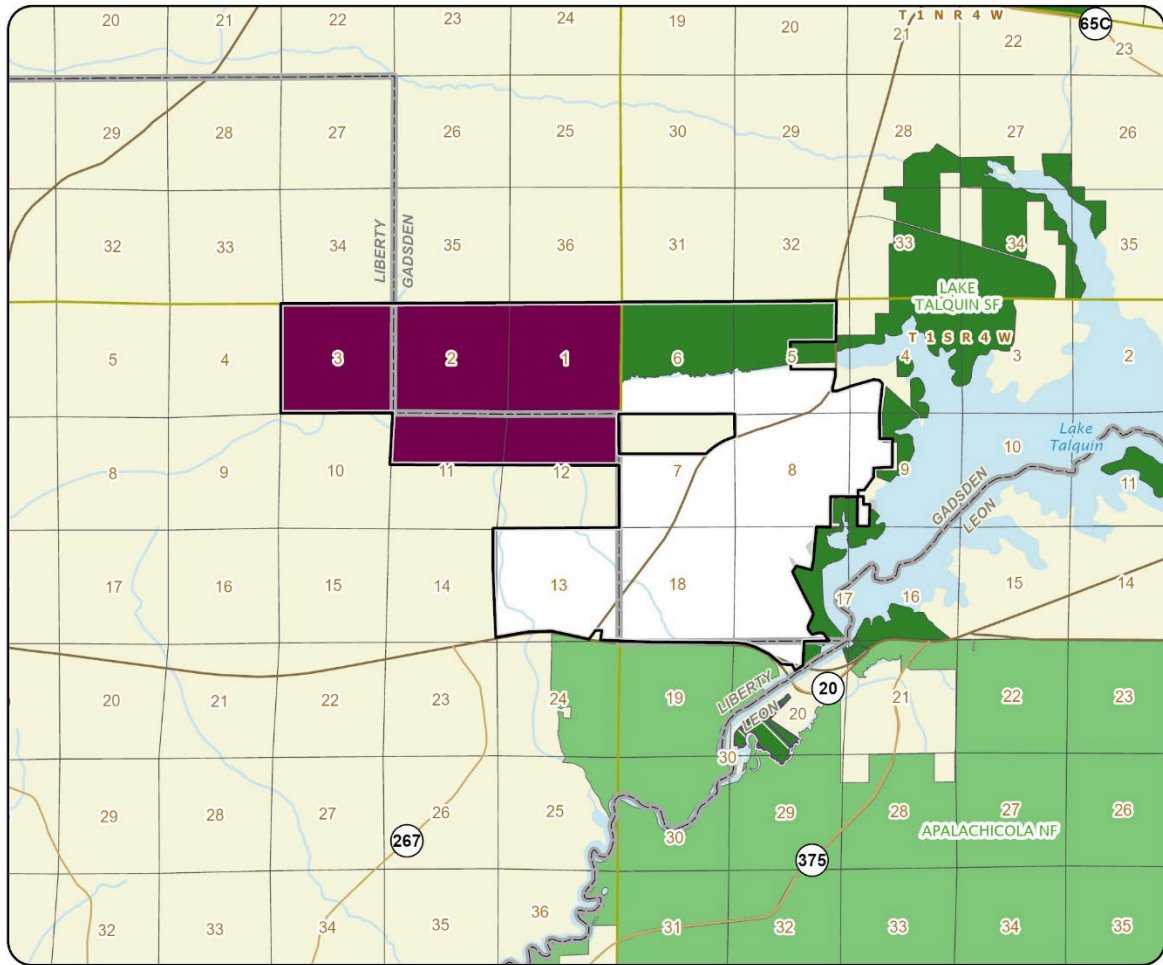
The Florida Forest Service (FFS) will cooperate with and seek the assistance of other state agencies, local government entities and other interested parties as appropriate.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Salary (1 FTE)	\$29,000
OCO	\$40,900
TOTAL	\$69,900

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### HOSFORD CHAPMAN'S RHODODENDRON PROTECTION ZONE

#### GADSDEN AND LIBERTY COUNTIES

