

# Lafayette Forest

Partnerships & Regional Incentives

Lafayette County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Project Acres</i>	<i>13,217</i>
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	<i>2,960</i>
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	<i>10,256</i>
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	<i>\$11,058,448</i>

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Lafayette Forest project creates a significant corridor connection between state and private conservation lands, creating a 70,000-acre block of conservation lands. The project will increase the protection of biodiversity as the project area is known to support rare species. The project will protect and restore the natural function of land and water by restoring the natural, pre-existing hydrology and preserving wetlands that aid surface retention of water. The Lafayette Forest project will increase the amount of forestland available for sustainable management by managing existing natural communities to perpetuate natural species.

## General Description

The Lafayette Forest project is in eastern Lafayette County on the western side of the Suwannee River, extending south to the Levy County line. The project consists of basin swamps, wet prairies, floodplain swamps, interspersed between pine silviculture plantations established on disturbed mesic and hydric flatwoods and sandhill community types.

## FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida mouse	G3/S3
Eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G3/S3
Little blue heron	G5/S4
White ibis	G5/S4

## Public Use

The primary land management goals for the management of the tract are to: restore, maintain, and protect all native ecosystems in perpetuity; integrate compatible human use; and ensure long-term viability of populations and species considered rare. Development of facilities would be kept to the



minimum level necessary to assure a high-quality recreational experience and any such development would be confined to areas of previous disturbance. This ecosystem and multiple use approach will guide the management activities on this project. Protection and restoration of the sensitive wetlands on this project will be a priority. Public use will be limited to activities that will have little or no impact on these areas.

### Acquisition Planning

#### **2004**

On June 4, 2004, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added the Lafayette Forest project to Group B of the 2004 Florida Forever Priority List. This fee-simple project, sponsored by the Conservation Fund and the Florida Forest Service (FFS), consisted of approximately 13,176 acres with a single owner, International Paper Co., and a 2003 taxable value of \$1,706,933. The essential parcels were identified as the International Paper Company ownership.

#### **2005**

On January 25, 2005, ARC moved this project to Group A of the 2005 Florida Forever Priority List.

#### **2011**

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

#### **2024**

In December 2024, ARC approved the removal of FWC-3 (Arnold) from the Strategic Managed Area Lands List Florida Forever project and its subsequent addition to the Lafayette Forest Florida Forever project.

### Coordination

The Suwannee River Water Management District acquired 820 acres in 2007.

### Management Policy Statement

The primary land management goals for managing the tract are to restore, maintain and protect in perpetuity all native ecosystems; integrate compatible human use; and ensure long-term viability of populations and species that are considered rare. This ecosystem and multiple use approach will guide the management activities on this project. Multiple use is defined as a combination of balanced and diverse resource uses that consider the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources including recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural scenic, scientific and historic values; harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment.

### Manager(s)

FFS is recommended as the lead manager.





## Management Prospectus

### **Qualifications for State Designation**

Much of the acreage of this project consists of planted mesic and wet flatwoods. The project primarily consists of slash and loblolly pine plantations, and it is estimated that approximately 62 percent of the project area has been converted to planted pines. The tract has been managed for silviculture production for several years. The current silviculture objectives are pulpwood and chip-n-saw production and range in age from 1 to 25 years. With thinning, introducing prescribed fire and sustainable forestry management practices, the project could be quickly transformed from management for silviculture to an area managed for its ecological and recreational benefits.

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

Much of the project's flatwoods, mesic hammock and upland mixed forest areas have been disturbed by silviculture operations and will require restoration. Areas where timber species are off-site may require thinning or removal to promote the re-generation of native ground covers and canopy.

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

Once the project area is acquired and assigned to FFS, public access will be immediately provided for low-intensity outdoor recreation activities such as hunting and fishing. FFS proposes to manage the site as a state forest and will manage activities and coordinate public access and use. Initial and intermediate management will concentrate on resource inventory, restoration and reforestation of areas where harvesting has occurred, hydrological restoration, providing site security and assessing public and fire management access. Inventories of the site's natural resources, its threatened and endangered flora and fauna, will be conducted to provide a basis for the formulation of a management plan. The numerous roads throughout the property necessitate the development of a road plan to identify those roads to be utilized for vehicular access by the public, those roads that are required for administrative use, and roads that are determined to be unnecessary for management or access should be closed. Steps will be taken so the public is provided with appropriate access while simultaneously affording protection of sensitive resources.

### **Revenue-generating Potential**

As mentioned above, timber sales will be conducted as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will primarily take place in planted pine stands and will provide a variable source of revenue dependent upon a variety of factors. Due to the existing condition and volume of the timber resources on the property, revenue generating potential of this project is expected to be moderate. Some revenues might be realized in the future from recreational user fees and ecotourism activities if such projects could be economically developed.

Florida Forever capital project expenditures are going to be needed on this parcel for prescribed fire, vegetative and hydrologic restoration, improved public access/use and facilities, both public and administrative. It is anticipated that some of the existing roads and trails may be used as multi-use trails





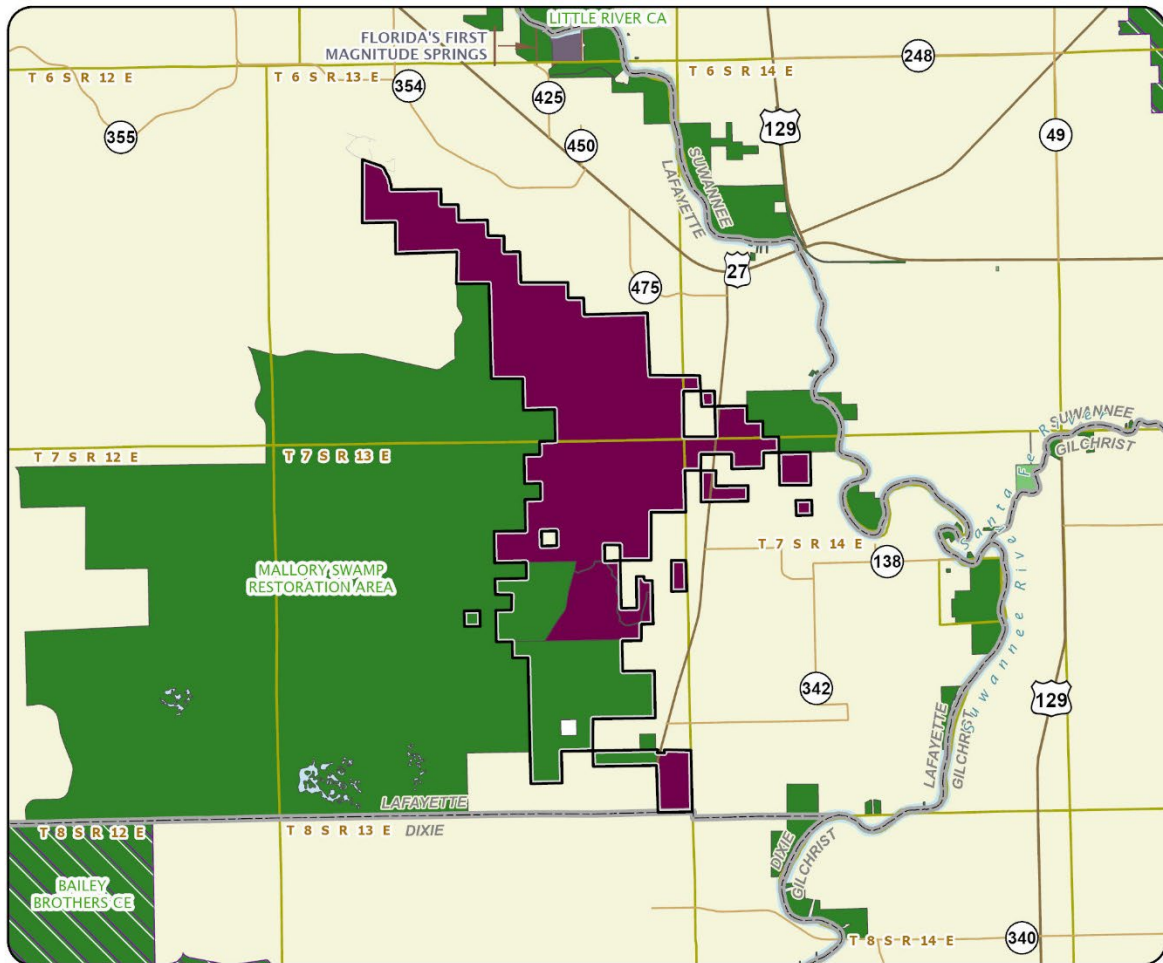
for hiking, horseback riding and biking. This Management Prospectus is not intended to be an application for capital project funding; however, as more information is gathered, and an analysis of the site is completed, FFS intends to apply for capital project funds.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FFS</u>	<u>Startup</u>	<u>Recurring</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	not provided
Salary (3 FTE)	\$77,035	not provided
OPS	\$0	not provided
Expense	\$123,300	not provided
OCO	\$423,725	not provided
FCO	\$0	not provided
TOTAL	\$624,060	not provided

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### LAFAYETTE FOREST

#### LAFAYETTE 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

