

# Osceola Pine Savannas

Critical Natural Lands

Osceola County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1995
<i>Project Acres</i>	46,642
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	23,755
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	22,887
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$109,573,382

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Osceola Pine Savannas project will conserve open rangelands, pine flatwoods and palmetto prairies in Osceola County, maintaining a link of natural lands between Bull Creek Wildlife Management Area (BCWMA) and Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area (TLWMA). Preserving these lands will help ensure the survival of native and imperiled species. The project will also provide public access for recreational activities like hunting, hiking and wildlife observation.

## General Description

The project is characterized by an area of old beach ridges and intervening swales, with high-quality longleaf pine flatwoods interrupted by cypress strands, cypress domes and wet prairies. There are also extensive dry prairies and patches of oak or sand pine scrub, all of which are natural communities of the Kissimmee Prairie. It is habitat for species like Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*) and crested caracara (*Caracara plancus*), as well as the federally endangered Florida grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*). Much of the land is used as unimproved range and disturbed areas are mainly improved pastures located to the south. Two archaeological sites are known on the property.





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<b><u>FNAI Elements</u></b>	<b><u>Score</u></b>
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida grasshopper sparrow	G5T1/S1
Striped newt	G2G3/S2
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Red-cockaded woodpecker	G3/S2
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Crested caracara	G5/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
<i>scrub bluestem</i>	G1G2/S1S2
Arogos skipper	G2G3T1T2/S2
Loammi skipper	G2/S2?
Florida sandhill crane	G5T2/S2

**Public Use**

The project will be designated as a wildlife management area, with uses such as hiking, wildlife observation and hunting. Acquisition would also help complete the Florida National Scenic Trail, a statewide non-motorized trail that crosses several Florida Forever project sites.

**Acquisition Planning**

**1994**

On December 7, 1994, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added the Osceola Pine Savannas project to the 1995 Conservation and Recreational Lands Priority List. The fee-simple acquisition, sponsored by Florida Natural Areas Inventory, was 42,491 acres with multiple owners and a taxable value of \$32,430,057.

Essential tracts were owned by Robertson, McNamara, Equitable Life (acquired), Donovan, Montsococa, Redding, Keen, Kennedy, Henderson, Campos, Broussard and the Mormon Church.

**1998**

On October 15, 1998, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council designated two additional parcels as essential: a 229-acre tract adjacent to the Equitable Life ownership and a 17-acre tract between two other large tracts.

**2002**

On June 6, 2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) moved the project to Group A of the 2002 Florida Forever Priority List and approved a 2,279-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by Dr. William Broussard, consisted of two owners and had a taxable value of \$695,238. The Broussard property consisted of 1,282 acres and will be acquired as less-than-fee; the Vanosdol property consisted of 997 acres and will be acquired as fee simple.

**2006**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) acquired 904 acres of property in 2006.





On August 11, 2006, ARC approved a 5,529-acre addition (Lucky L Ranch) to the project boundary. Sponsored by The Nature Conservancy and FWC, it consisted of five ownerships and 25 parcels, was proposed fee-simple and less-than-fee and had a taxable value of \$1,504,685. The parcels have been designated as essential.

On December 22, 2006, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) established the Kaschai conservation easement (45.16 acres). A small portion of the conservation easement is within the project boundary.

## **2007**

In October 2007, the Board of Trustees acquired 1,430 acres from William Broussard to be managed as a conservation easement.

## **2008**

In June 2008, 1,649.8 acres were purchased in TLWMA (Lucky L Ranch) for \$11,651,000. FWC will manage the property.

## **2010**

On October 15, 2010, ARC approved a 557-acre reduction to the project boundary due to residential/commercial/infrastructure development.

## **2011**

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

## **2012**

On May 1, 2012, FWC established a conservation easement and Phase I of a long-term gopher tortoise recipient site in the Allen Broussard Conservancy, which lies entirely within the project boundary.

## **2013**

On April 4, 2013, FWC established a conservation easement and Phase II of a long-term gopher tortoise recipient site in the Allen Broussard Conservancy, which lies entirely within the project boundary.

On October 7, 2013, FWC established a conservation easement and Phase III of a long-term gopher tortoise recipient site in the Allen Broussard Conservancy, which lies entirely within the project boundary.

## **2015**

On October 12, 2015, SJRWMD added 4.34 acres to the Kaschai conservation easement (for a total of 49.5 acres) as part of an exchange. Approximately 9 acres of the conservation easement are within the project boundary.

## **2016**

On October 14, 2016, the South Florida Water Management District established the Lucky L Ranch conservation easement on approximately 1,152.35 acres, all of which are in the project boundary.





## **2023**

In June 2023, ARC approved the addition of seven parcels totaling 9 acres to the project boundary in Osceola County.

In December 2023, ARC approved the addition of one parcel totaling 4.88 acres to the project boundary in Osceola County.

The Department of Environmental Protection acquired a 285-acre conservation easement in Osceola County from Mark W. Collins and Catherine E. Murtha.

## **2024**

In September 2024, ARC approved the addition of two parcels totaling 0.29 acres to the project boundary in Osceola County.

### Coordination

SJRWMD and FWC have acquired over 19,007 acres (Triple N Ranch Wildlife Management Area) in the northern one-third of the project area. FWC has also acquired 1,920 acres adjacent to the southern boundary and has completed a 1,921-acre acquisition centrally located within the project boundary. They have also acquired a large essential tract in the central portion of the project (Equitable Life).

### Management Policy Statement

The primary management objective is to preserve and restore the integrity of the extensive functional ecosystems that now extend from BCWMA to TLWMA. Achieving this objective will protect habitat for several endangered species that need large natural areas to survive (such as the Florida grasshopper sparrow). It will also provide the public with over 100,000 acres to enjoy natural-resource-based recreation like hiking and hunting.

The project would be managed under the multiple-use concept. Management activities should be directed first toward preservation of resources and second toward integrating carefully controlled consumptive uses such as hunting and logging. Managers should control access to the project; limit public motor vehicles to one or a few main roads; thoroughly inventory the resources; restore hydrological disturbances; burn the fire-dependent pine flatwoods in a pattern mimicking natural lightning-season fires, using natural firebreaks or existing roads for control; reforest pine plantations and improved pastures with original species; prohibit timbering in old-growth stands; and monitor management activities to ensure that they are actually preserving resources. Managers should limit the number and size of recreational facilities, ensure that they avoid the most sensitive resources and site them in already disturbed areas when possible. The project includes most of the undeveloped land between BCWMA and TLWMA and consequently has the size and location to meet its primary objective.

### Manager(s)

FWC will manage the Osceola Pine Savannas project.

### Management Prospectus

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

The Osceola Pine Savannas project has the resource diversity to qualify as a wildlife management area.





**Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

The project primarily includes lands that are low-need tracts, requiring basic resource management and protection.

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

Within the first year after acquisition, activities will concentrate on site security, public access, fire management, resource inventory and litter removal. A conceptual management plan will be developed that describes the goals of future resource management on the site. Long-term plans for the property will stress the protection and management of threatened and endangered species. Programs for recreational uses will also be implemented. A burn management plan will be developed and implemented using conventional and biologically acceptable providing multiple guidelines. Management activities will also strive to manage natural plant communities for the benefit of native wildlife. Forest resources will be managed using appropriate silvicultural practices as recommended by the Florida Forest Service (FFS). A resource inventory will be used to identify sensitive areas that need special attention, protection, or management. Unnecessary roads, fire lines and ditches will be abandoned or restored. Infrastructure will be kept to the minimum necessary for public access and management.

**Revenue-generating Potential**

While the pinelands have significant economic value, their value to wildlife is even greater. A purchased management area stamp would be required to hunt on the area; this could also be required for all users. Additional revenue would be generated by sales of hunting licenses and special hunting stamps (i.e., archery stamp, turkey stamp, etc.).

**Cooperators in Management Activities**

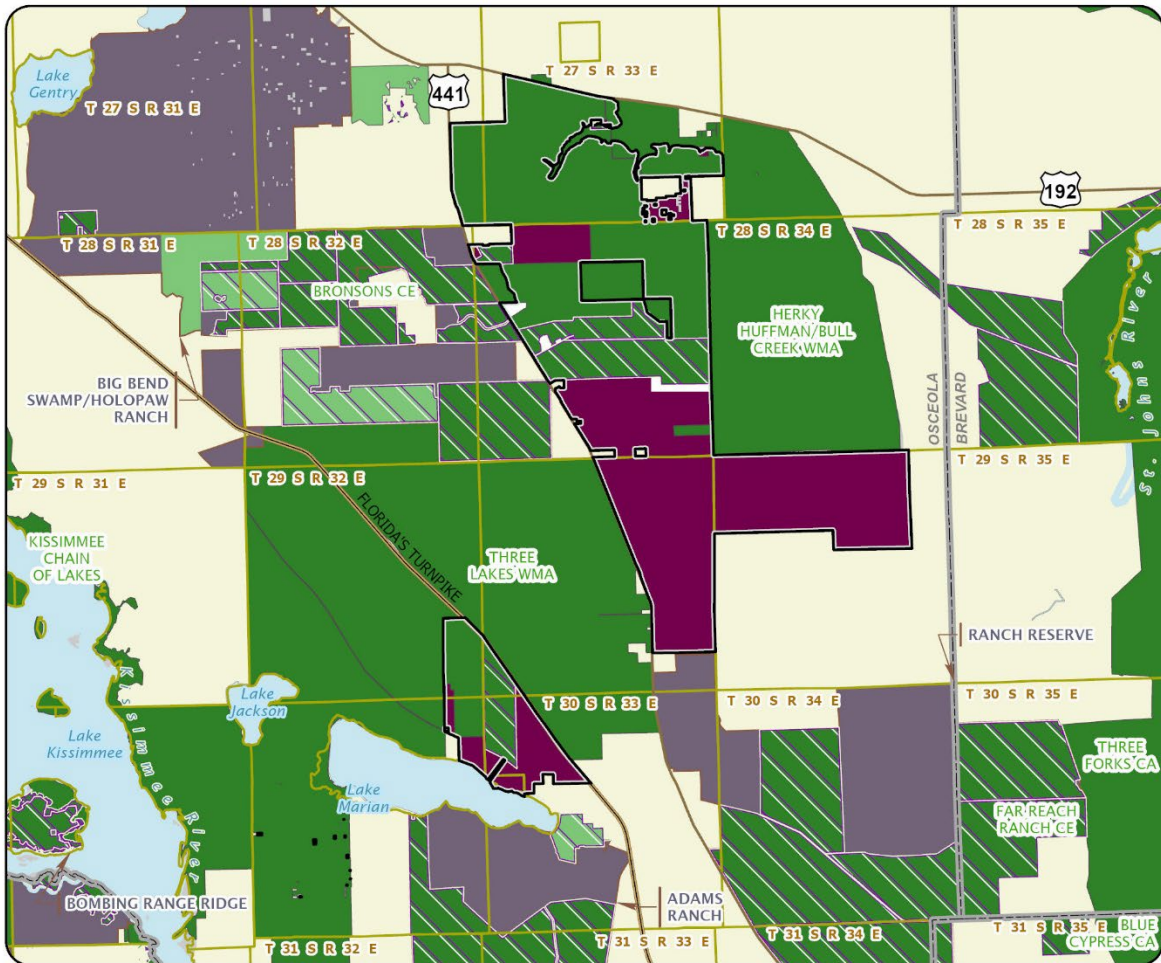
SJRWMD and FFS are recommended as cooperating managers.

Management Cost Summary

<u>FWC</u>	<u>1996/97</u>	<u>1997/98</u>
Source of Funds	CARL	CARL
Salary	\$74,645	\$114,485
OPS	\$0	\$30,500
Expense	\$55,473	\$131,525
OCO	\$0	\$308,148
TOTAL	\$130,118	\$584,658

Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted





### OSCEOLA PINE SAVANNAS

#### OSCEOLA COUNTY

