

# Peace River Refuge

Less-Than-Fee

DeSoto and Hardee Counties

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2010
<i>Project Acres</i>	5,744
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	850
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	4,894
<i>2024 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$27,636,184

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Peace River Refuge project will preserve the water quality and habitat of the Peace River and its tributaries, protect water quality for the downstream Charlotte Harbor Estuary, and conserve habitat for aquatic and upland wildlife associated with the area's hardwood forested uplands and riverine wetlands.

## General Description

The Peace River Refuge is in central DeSoto County, southwest of the city of Arcadia. The project follows the Peace River on both sides for approximately 8 river miles before meeting the Peace River State Forest to the south. The eastern portion of the project also contains frontage along Joshua Creek, a Peace River tributary. Most of the site's eastern boundary is formed by an abandoned railroad grade located less than one mile west of U.S. 17.

Overall, the site is primarily hardwood forested uplands; however, bottomland forests and open point bars are associated with the river and old meander features of the floodplain. Approximately 88 percent of the proposal can be classified as natural communities.

Most uplands within the project proposal are mesic hammock with a live oak canopy over a predominantly saw palmetto understory. While flooding from the Peace River likely inundates many of these hammocks occasionally or even annually, the land is dry for most of the year.

Much of the land on the northeastern portion of the proposal has been converted to improved pastures. Scattered oaks are common throughout these pastures. Various other clearings are scattered on the property, including areas with standing structures (hunt camps, bridges and remnants of old buildings such as a sawmill on the western side of the property).





FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
<i>Florida spiny-pod</i>	G2/S2
Round-tailed muskrat	G2/S2
<i>redmargin zephyrlily</i>	G2G3/S2S3
Wood stork	G4/S2
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Little blue heron	G5/S4

Public Use

The project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access.

Acquisition Planning

**2010**

On June 11, 2010, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added the Peace River Refuge project to the Less-Than-Fee category of the Florida Forever Priority List. The project had an estimated tax-assessed value of \$12,567,267.

**2021**

In 2021, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) acquired a 771.20-acre conservation easement in DeSoto County from Peace River Preserve, LLC.

**2022**

On April 8, 2022, ARC approved the 700-acre Johnson Homestead project proposal and combined it with the Peace River Refuge project.

**2023**

In December of 2023, ARC approved the addition of one parcel totaling approximately 149.11 acres in DeSoto County.

**2024**

In April 2024, ARC approved the addition of four parcels totaling approximately 259.4 acres in Hardee County to the project boundary.

On November 1, 2024, ARC approved the addition of the Rock Bend Ranch project proposal (658 acres) in DeSoto County to the project boundary.

In December 2024, ARC approved the addition of one parcel totaling approximately 103.82 acres in Hardee County to the project boundary.

Coordination

There are no known acquisition partners.





### **Management Policy Statement**

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

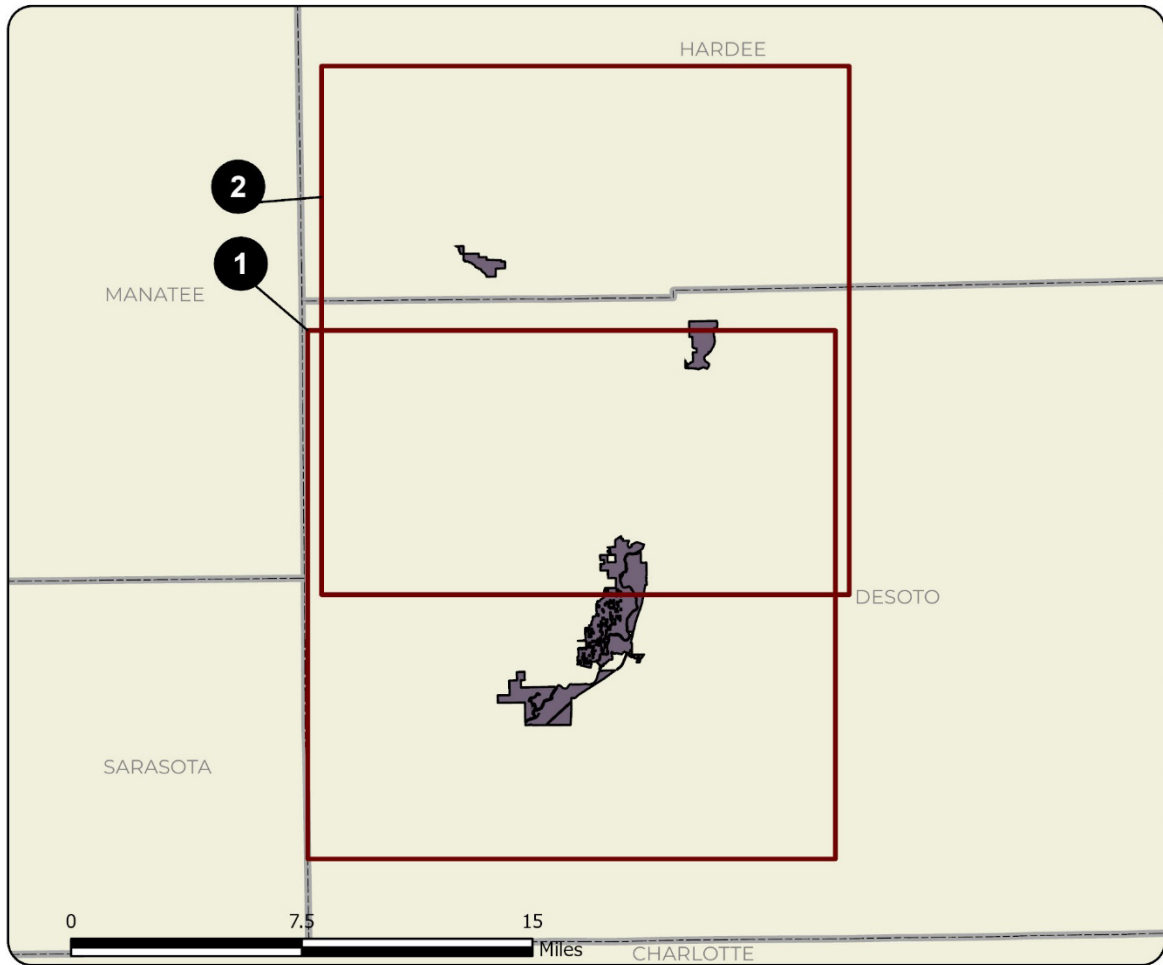
### **Manager(s)**

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of the Peace River Refuge 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.

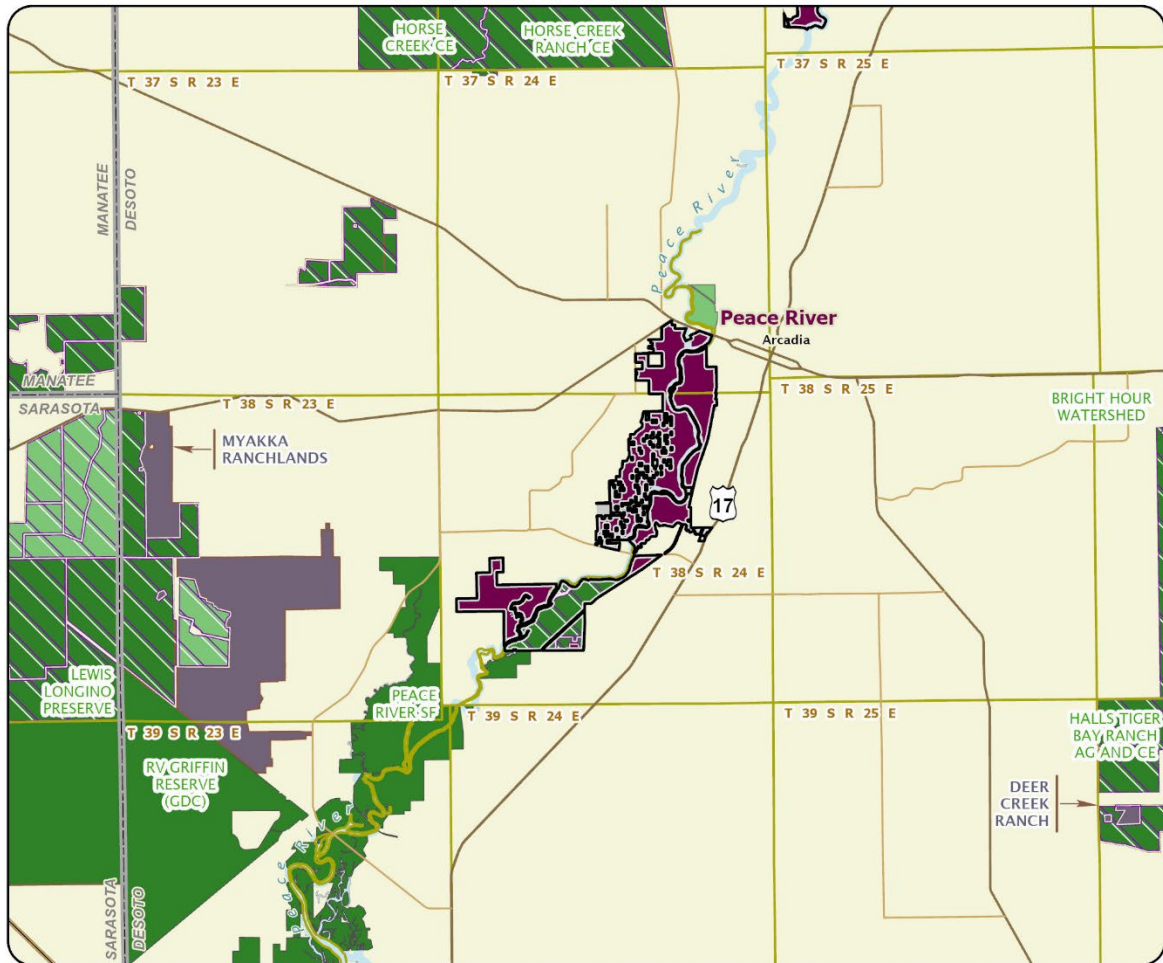




### PEACE RIVER REFUGE: OVERVIEW

#### DESOTO AND HARDEE COUNTIES

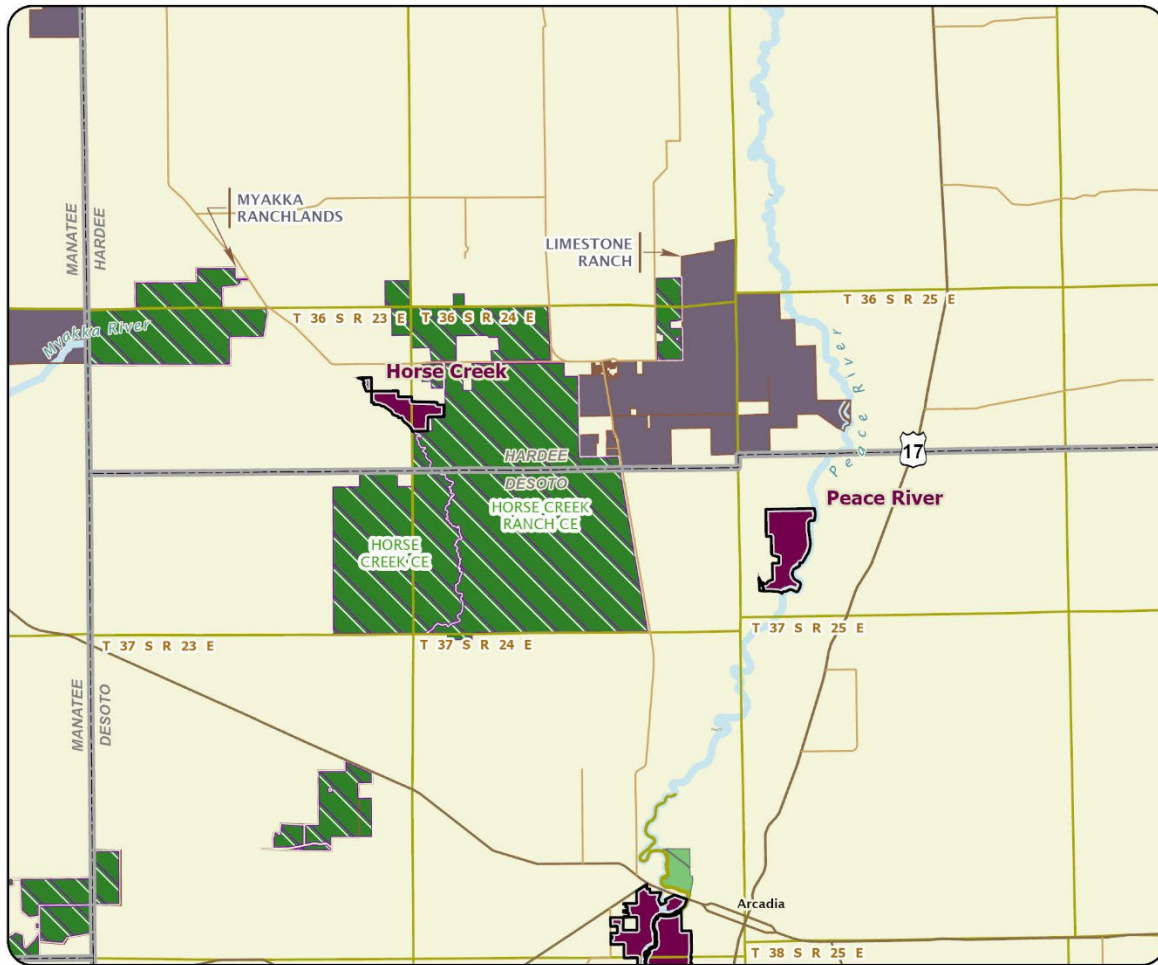




PEACE RIVER REFUGE: MAP 1

DESOTO COUNTY





PEACE RIVER REFUGE: MAP 2

DESOTO AND HARDEE COUNTIES

