

# River Property

Less-Than-Fee

Highlands County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2022
<i>Project Acres</i>	3,068
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	3,068
<i>2021 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$1,872,644

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The River Property project would conserve a working agricultural landscape and contribute to the creation of a wildlife corridor between critical natural areas. The project could also contribute to the restoration of the natural floodplain function of the Kissimmee River.

## General Description

The River Property is in eastern Highlands County, adjacent to the Kissimmee River Water Management Area that is managed by the South Florida Water Management District. As a working cattle ranch, the dominant land cover type on-site is improved pasture interspersed with ditches, disturbed wetlands and scattered disturbed remnants of mesic hammock. Multiple listed species are known to occur within the project area, including Florida sandhill crane, wood stork and little blue heron.

Located within Priority 1 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network, the property is a critical link for the travel of long-ranging species (such as the Florida panther) through the Fisheating Creek watershed to the Kissimmee River Valley. While no archaeological or historical sites are known to occur within the project boundary, five historic structures, 30 archaeological sites and five resource groups are located within a five-mile radius of the property. The property has also been identified for potential acquisition as part of the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project, a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

## FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida burrowing owl	G4T3/S3
Bald eagle	G5/S3



## Public Use

The River Property project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition with no public access.

## Acquisition Planning

### **2022**

On April 8, 2022, the Acquisition and Restoration Council voted to add the River Property project to the 2023 Florida Forever Priority List.

The goal of one of the proposed wetland restoration features within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project, the Kissimmee River Center, is to restore approximately 1,200 acres of riverine and floodplain wetlands including 760 acres of the River Property. Completing this restoration project would require fee simple interest in the property, creating a potential conflict with less-than-fee acquisition through Florida Forever or other acquisition programs. Therefore, project acreage being considered for acquisition for the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project has been designated non-essential.

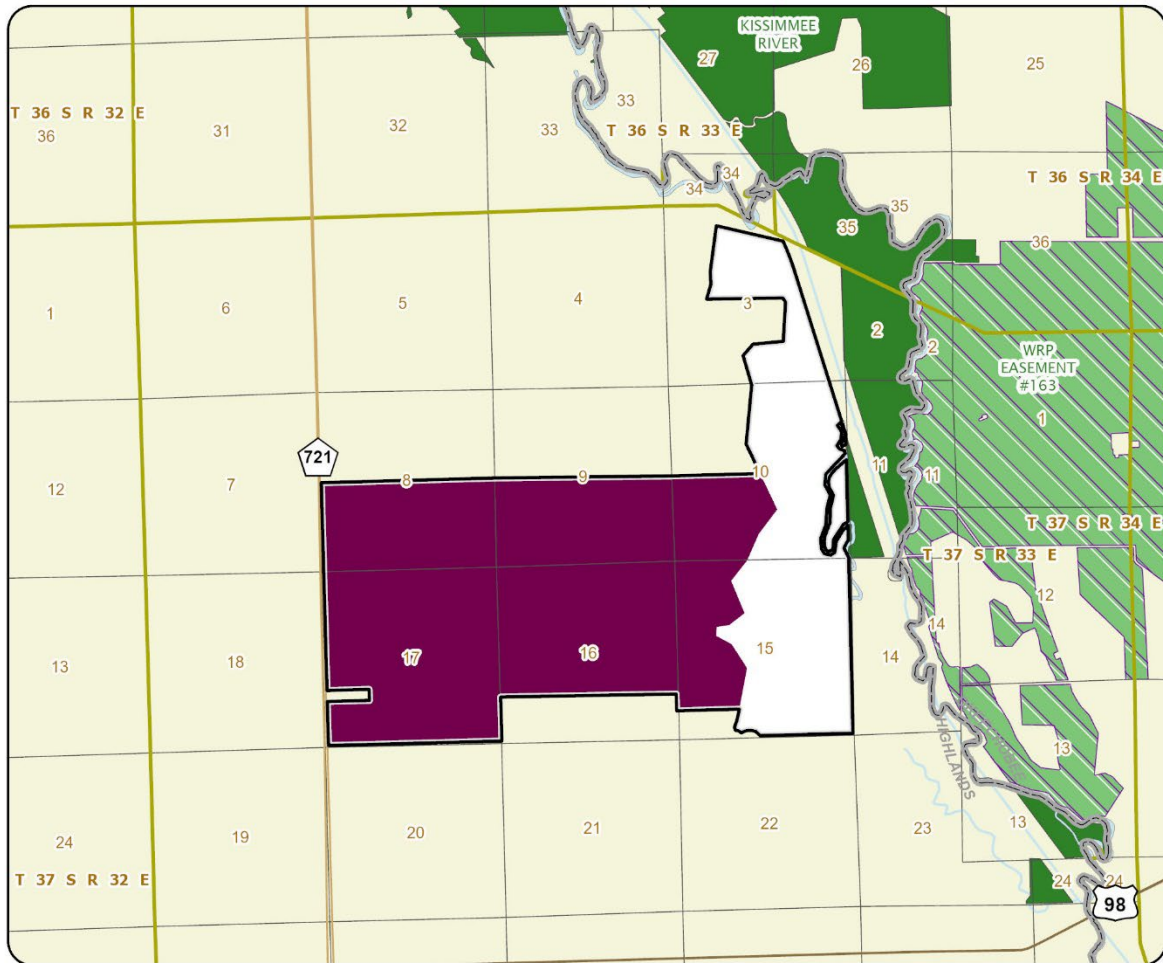
## Management Policy Statement

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

## Manager(s)

If acquired as less-than-fee, management responsibility of the project would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring to confirm continued conservation easement compliance would be coordinated by the Division of State Lands.





### RIVER PROPERTY

#### HIGHLANDS COUNTY

