

Williamson Cattle Company

Less-Than-Fee

Okeechobee County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2023
<i>Project Acres</i>	7,419
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	7,419
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$57,337,255

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Williamson Cattle Company project will protect the quality and quantity of water flowing to Lake Okeechobee. The project also helps to conserve land in a rapidly growing area with critical ecological connectivity. Williamson Cattle Company is home to a variety of rare species and acquisition of the property will expand protection of this critical habitat.

General Description

The Williamson Cattle Company project contains 23 whole and partial parcels, totaling 7,419 acres in Okeechobee County. The project is about five miles north of Lake Okeechobee and about 10 miles east of the Kissimmee River. To the west, the property shares a boundary with Taylor Creek, a ditched waterway, and separates the property from Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Conservation Area and Taylor Creek Stormwater Treatment Area. Williamson Cattle Company's proximity to these prominent water bodies makes it critical for surface water protection and aquifer recharge. The project is within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) study area.

The predominant natural communities found at Williamson Cattle Company include mesic hammock, basin swamp, depression marsh and mesic flatwoods. A variety of rare species have been documented on site including the pine pinweed, common wild pine, crested caracara and wood stork, among others. Williamson Cattle Company's close proximity to Taylor Creek also provides critical habitat for a variety of wading birds, including the Florida sandhill crane.

There are two documented historic features at Williamson Cattle Company, the Williamson Canal System (OB00290) and Okeechobee Railroad Grade (OB00289). These features record the historic uses of the property and how it is important to the broader culture of Okeechobee County. There are possibly additional unrecorded historic sites on the Williamson Cattle Company project, because only a portion of the property has been professionally surveyed.

Williamson Cattle Company is a working cattle ranch, horse farm and citrus grove. As such, much of the property is made up of improved pasture, agriculture and semi-improved pasture. Williamson Cattle



Company already has three permanent U.S. Department of Agriculture Wetland Reserve Easements over two large basin marshes for water storage; the project includes the unprotected portions of the property.

FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
<i>pine pinweed</i>	G2/S2
Wood stork	G4/S2
Crested caracara	G5/S2
Bald eagle	G5/S3
Southeastern fox squirrel	G5T5/S3S4

Public Use

Williamson Cattle Company is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and does not provide for public access. Due to the lack of public access, there will not be any public resource-based outdoor recreation potential for the project.

Acquisition Planning

2023

On April 14, 2023, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added Williamson Cattle Company to the Less-Than-Fee category of the 2024 Florida Forever Priority List. The less-than-fee project includes 7,419 acres and a just value of \$42,933,132.

Coordination

The project was proposed by the Florida Conservation Group and Common Ground Ecology.

Management Policy Statement

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

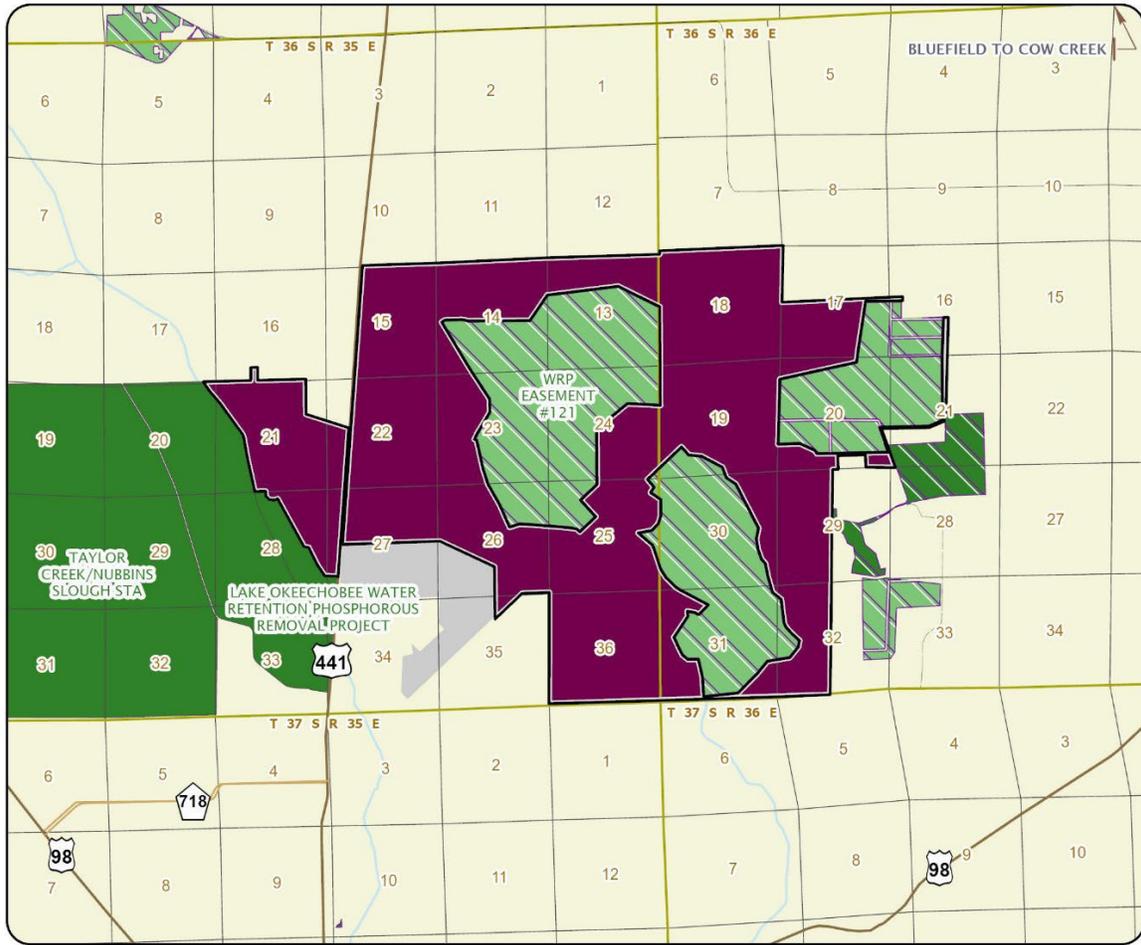
Manager

If acquired as less-than-fee, management of Williamson Cattle Company would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site’s management to confirm compliance with the conditions of the conservation easement would be coordinated by the Division of State Lands.

Management Prospectus

The Division of State Lands will periodically monitor the conservation easement, while the management will be conducted by the property owner.





WILLIAMSON CATTLE COMPANY

OKEECHOBEE 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

