

# Yarborough Ranch

Partnerships and Regional Incentives

Seminole County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	2023
<i>Project Acres</i>	1,361
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	0
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$0
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	1,361
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$5,650,756

## Purpose for State Acquisition

The Yarborough Ranch project will help to preserve and protect the water quality of the Geneva Freshwater Lens and the Big Econlockhatchee Drainage Basin. The project's proximity to Little Big Econ State Forest and conservation lands in Seminole County increases connectivity of public and private conservation lands, protects a critical wildlife corridor, surface and groundwater protection and protects habitat for a variety of imperiled plant and animal species, including the Florida black bear.

## General Description

The Yarborough Ranch project contains one parcel, totaling 1,361 acres in Seminole County. On the western and southern side, the property is surrounded by Little Big Econ State Forest, and on the eastern side by the Kilbee Ranch Conservation Easement. The predominant natural communities found at Yarborough Ranch include basin swamp, baygall, mesic hammock, scrubby flatwoods, wet flatwoods and mesic flatwoods.

Yarborough Ranch is located within the Big Econlockhatchee Drainage Basin and almost entirely within the Geneva Lens, which is a unique and valuable hydrologic resource protected through section 373.4597, Florida Statutes. It is a portion of the Floridan Aquifer that forms an isolated, freshwater lens surrounded by non-potable water. The Geneva Lens covers approximately 22 square miles and is bounded by the St. Johns River and Lake Harney on the north and east, Econlockhatchee River to the south and Lake Jesup to the west.

Much of the property has been historically used as a working cattle ranch. As such, most of the property is made up of improved or semi-improved pasture. A system of ditches has been constructed to drain the pastures on the property. These feed into a drainage canal which runs north to south and is routed through most of the major wetland areas on the site, likely affecting the hydrology of the surrounding natural communities.

One previously unrecorded archaeological site was observed during the field evaluation. The site, Yarborough Ranch Mound (SE0336), appears to be a Native American mound of unknown antiquity in good condition. This mound has not yet been subject to formal analysis.



FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

**FNAI Elements**

Florida black bear

**Score**

G5T4/S4

**Public Use**

Upland areas of the project could be utilized for expansion of public outdoor recreation opportunities currently available within Little Big Econ State Forest. If acquired, the property would be managed by Seminole County as a part of the Seminole County Natural Lands Program. This could include such uses as hiking, equestrian activities, bicycling and nature appreciation.

**Acquisition Planning**

**2023**

On October 13, 2023, the Acquisition and Restoration Council voted to add Yarborough Ranch to the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category of the 2024 Florida Forever Priority List. The fee simple project includes 1,361 acres and a just value of \$5,650,756.

**Coordination**

The project was proposed by Seminole County. The Seminole Forever program is a potential partner in the acquisition of Yarborough Ranch. Other potential partners may include the Florida Forest Service and the St. Johns River Water Management District.

**Management Policy Statement**

The primary management goals of the project are to protect and sustain populations of threatened and endangered species; to allow restoration of wetlands; to provide connectivity to adjacent conservation lands; to provide appropriate nature-based recreation that offers public enjoyment of the site without damaging the unique natural habitats; and to periodically review, evaluate and modify the management of the Yarborough Ranch property.

**Manager**

Seminole County is the identified manager for Yarborough Ranch.

**Management Prospectus**

**Qualifications for State Designation**

Acquisition of Yarborough Ranch is desirable due to its connectivity between multiple conservation lands.

**Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management**

A large portion of the property has been used for raising cattle. This involved converting land to pasture and channelizing the property, with approximately 55% of Yarborough Ranch being made up of improved pasture.

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

Multi-use activities on the property will be implemented pursuant to Chapter 190, Florida Statutes, and the Seminole County Parks System Master Plan. The primary objective will be to protect the resources on-site while providing access and compatible passive recreation opportunities to the public. Once the property is acquired, a detailed site assessment will be conducted, and the management planning process





will be initiated. As the plan is created, securing the site and low impact accessibility improvements will begin. Any extensive site improvements for restoration or allowing for public access will not be initiated until the final management plan is accepted by the Seminole Board of County Commissioners. Through partnerships with local law enforcement, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Florida Forest Service, the site will be monitored regularly for signs of undesirable activities and resource degradation.

The site will also be monitored for trespassers and unauthorized access on a regular basis. Boundary signs will be created and installed with any applicable restrictions clearly listed and contact information for those seeking authorized access.

**Revenue-generating Potential**

Typical revenue generating programs in Seminole County include camping along with educational and outdoor recreational activities.

**Cooperators in Management Activities**

The management strategy for the project site includes oversight by Seminole County’s Natural Lands staff. It also may include the use of partnerships with state land management partners. Seminole County has a history of successfully partnering with multiple state agencies for implementing appropriate habitat management activities on County owned and state-owned lands that Seminole County manages.

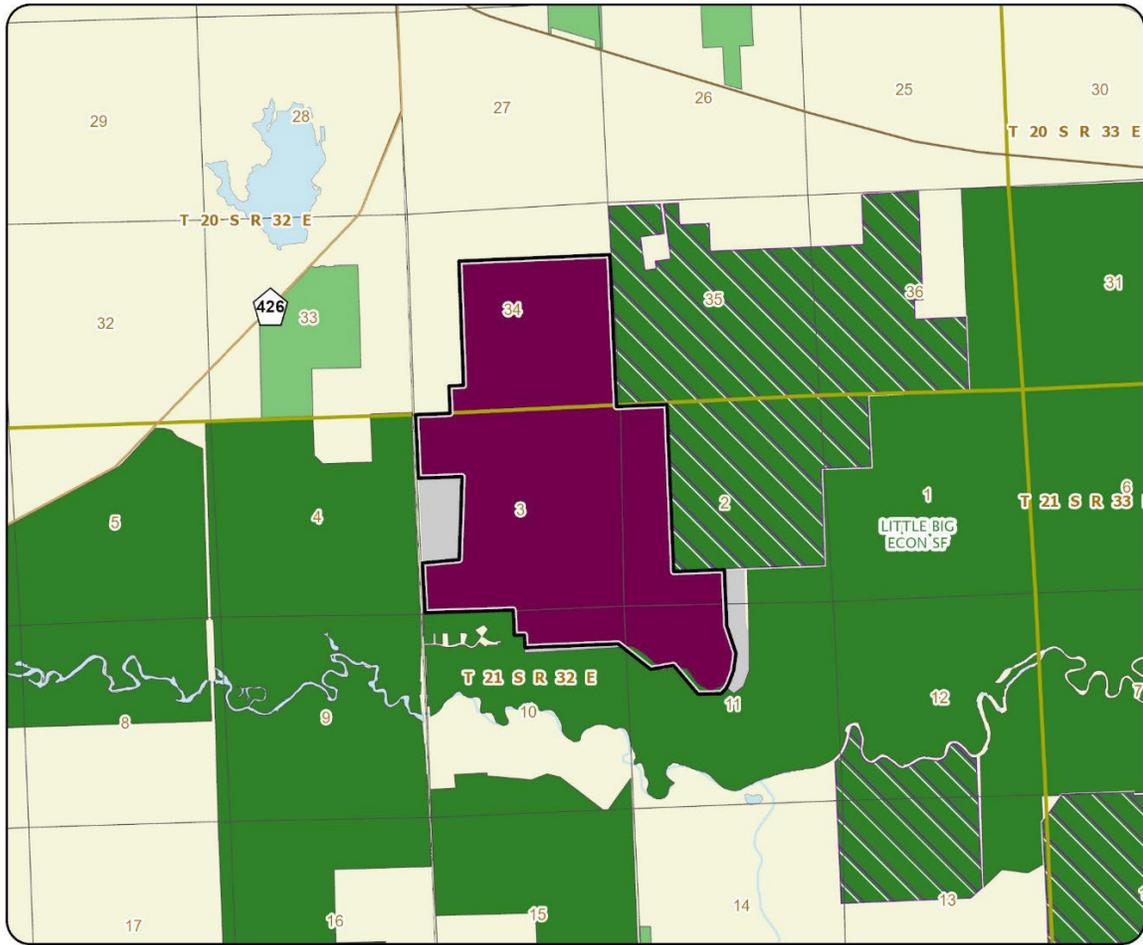
Management Cost Summary

A preliminary cost estimate for the first year is as follows.

Site Security (fencing/gate repair, boundary signs)	\$10,000
Invasive Plant Management	\$39,400
Demolition and Removal of Old Structures	\$10,000
Site Maintenance	\$15,000
Access improvements (roads, water crossings)	\$15,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$89,400</b>

*Source: Management Prospectus as originally submitted.*





### YARBOROUGH RANCH

#### SEMINOLE COUNTY

