

ITEM 5:

Consider project evaluation reports for the Avalon Phase II, Carter Quail Ranch, Creek Ranch, Floyd’s Mound, Quail Creek Ranch, and Williamson Cattle Company 2023 Cycle 1 Florida Forever proposals.

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

On December 9, 2022, ARC voted to move the Avalon Phase II, Carter Quail Ranch, Creek Ranch, Floyd’s Mound, Owen Creek Highlands, Quail Creek Ranch, and Williamson Cattle Company 2023 Cycle 1 Florida Forever proposals on for more detailed review. The Owen Creek Highlands landowner subsequently requested that the project be deferred. The Division of State Lands (DSL) with input from partner agencies has prepared evaluation reports. These reports are included as backup to this item.

Public notice was posted for receiving public testimony on the 2023 Cycle 1 proposals approved by ARC in December. The DSL held public hearings on March 13, March 14, and preceding this item at the April 14, 2023, ARC meeting. The public notices were posted in the Florida Administrative Register, West Volusia Beacon, The Ledger, Wauchula Herald Advocate, Lake Okeechobee News, Jefferson County Journal, Madison County Carrier and floridapublicnotices.com.

Proposal	Acres	Acquisition Type	County	Prospective Manager
Avalon Phase II	1,384	Less-Than-Fee	Jefferson	DSL
Carter Quail Ranch	1,344	Fee Simple	Volusia	Volusia County
Creek Ranch	1,295	Fee Simple	Polk	FWC
Floyd’s Mound	40	Fee Simple	Madison	DSL
Quail Creek Ranch	2,698	Less-Than-Fee	Hardee	DSL
Williamson Cattle Company	7,419	Less-Than-Fee	Okeechobee	DSL

DSL STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the project evaluation reports.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

- APPROVE**
- APPROVE WITH MODIFICATIONS:** _____
- DEFER**
- WITHDRAW**
- NOT APPROVE**
- OTHER:** _____

Executive Summary

The proposed Floyd's Mound Florida Forever project contains one 40-acre parcel in southwest Madison County. Floyd's Mound is west of SR 19 and near the border with Jefferson County. It is owned by Tall Timber Research, Inc. The project is proposed as a fee acquisition to be managed by the Division of Historical Resources. The property and has a tax assessed value of \$48,000.

The Floyd's Mound Florida Forever project is entirely within the boundary of archaeological site MD06 (Floyd's Mound), for which it is named. Floyd's Mound is one of the first archaeological sites recorded in Madison County (1961), and is notable for its primary surficial feature, a platform mound which is likely the largest in the Aucilla/Wacissa watershed. Research indicates that the site could potentially be the indigenous town of Asile, the namesake of the Aucilla river and seat of the Asile chiefdom, which was visited by Hernando De Soto's expedition in September of 1539. The State Historic Preservation Officer's (SHPO) evaluation determined Floyd's Mound as eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, a status reserved for Florida's most precious and important sites. Through fee acquisition and preservation for public benefit, the proposed project would increase the number and percentage of historic and archaeological properties listed in the Florida Master Site File or National Register of Historic Places.

The project proposal is most noteworthy for its cultural resources but also offers an opportunity to protect forested wetlands with high aesthetic and ecological value that are connected to the Aucilla River system. Most of the uplands have been converted to pine plantation or agricultural fields. The proposed project is located within Priority 5 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN).

An interagency team conducted a site visit to the project site on January 18, 2023. Information included in this project evaluation report is a result of this site visit.

If approved for addition to the 2024 Florida Forever Priority List, the project should be added as a standalone project in the Critical Historical Resources category. The entire property is considered essential due to the resources documented on-site (see Appendix C).

PURPOSE FOR ACQUISITION

If acquired, the Floyd's Mound project will provide protection for a significant cultural and archaeological site that is the only known site where Ft. Walton and Suwanee Valley Culture artifacts co-occur. Conservation of the ecological resources found within the project will also contribute to the protection and enhancement of the water quality of the Aucilla/Wacissa watershed and protect habitat for wildlife and plant species.

Acquisition of this project would serve to:

- increase the protection of Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community, and landscape levels
- preserve significant archaeological or historic sites
- increase natural resource-based public recreation or educational opportunities
- provide surface and groundwater protection and protect natural floodplain functions

- protect, restore, and maintain the quality and natural functions of land, water and wetland systems

GOAL E:

INCREASE NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED PUBLIC RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Measure E1, E3

The number of acres acquired that are available for natural resource-based public recreation or education.

The number of new resource-based recreation facilities, by type, made available on public land.

The project could provide up to 40 acres for public resource-based outdoor recreation and cultural resource interpretation. The site is compatible with wildlife viewing, birdwatching, and nature study. To ensure the protection of this sensitive cultural resource, archaeological assessment and research will be required prior to the development of any interpretive facilities and programming.

FLORIDA FOREVER CRITERIA

The proposed project meets the following Florida Forever criteria (§ 259.105, F.S.)

- The project meets multiple goals.
- The project has significant archaeological or historic value.

The Acquisition and Restoration Council shall give increased priority to:

- Projects that can be acquired in less than fee ownership, such as a permanent conservation easement.

MANAGEMENT

The Floyd's Mound project is proposed to be managed by the DHR for cultural resource protection and interpretation. The Management Prospectus is provided in Appendix F.

Appendix F

Management Prospectus for Floyd's Mound, a fee simple proposal.

Concurrent with its adoption of the annual Conservation and Recreation Lands list of acquisition projects pursuant to s. 259.035, the board of trustees shall adopt a management prospectus for each project. The management prospectus shall delineate:

- 1. The management goals for the property;*
- 2. The conditions that will affect the intensity of management;*
- 3. An estimate of the revenue-generating potential of the property, if appropriate;*
- 4. A timetable for implementing the various stages of management and for providing access to the public, if applicable;*
- 5. A description of potential multiple-use activities as described in this section and s. 253.034;*
- 6. Provisions for protecting existing infrastructure and for ensuring the security of the project upon acquisition;*
- 7. The anticipated costs of management and projected sources of revenue, including legislative appropriations, to fund management needs; and*
- 8. Recommendations as to how many employees will be needed to manage the property, and recommendations as to whether local governments, volunteer groups, the former landowner, or other interested parties can be involved in the management.*

Division of Historical Resources (DHR)

Management Prospectus

Floyd's Mound

Madison County, Florida

DHR Management:

The Division of Historical Resources (DHR) will take the lead in managing the Floyd's Mound Project (Project) situated in Madison County, Florida. DHR will be responsible for overseeing all cultural resource management efforts on the property, while also collaborating with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to handle all natural resource management tasks. With the primary focus on preserving Critical Historical Resources, DHR has the expertise to ensure proper investigation and inventory of cultural resources within the project. DHR's management of the Floyd's Mound parcel will offer a conservation-oriented recreational opportunity that emphasizes cultural resources in the Aucilla/Wacissa watershed, an area known for its archaeological and historical significance. Additionally, the formalized cooperation with FWC will enable sustainable natural resource management on the property and provide a wide range of dispersed, resource-based recreational options.

Working together with FWC and other relevant state and federal agencies, DHR will maintain the property by re-introducing and utilizing prescribed fire as a tool for managing fire-dependent ecosystems, controlling, and eliminating invasive species, and guaranteeing that all natural resources are managed following best practice operating principles.

Key Management Objective:

The foremost management objective of the project is to protect the interconnected cultural and natural landscape of the property while facilitating archaeological and historical research, educational activities, and resource-based outdoor recreational opportunities. As is the case with other properties under DHR management, the cultural resources on the property will be extensively studied and suitably interpreted. In collaboration with FWC, DHR will support recreational activities on the property that augment the value of natural resources and safeguard endangered species and vulnerable habitats.

Upon Property Acquisition and DHR Assignment as Lead Manager:

Once the property is acquired and DHR is assigned as the lead manager, immediate management efforts will focus on site security, monitoring access, and formulating a management plan. During the planning process, various recreational developments will be considered. The extent and diversity of future resource-based recreational opportunities offered will depend on the establishment of a management plan for the property. Following acquisition, DHR will seek to enable further systematic archaeological and historical investigation of the property, which will largely dictate the most appropriate locations and strategies for further management tasks.

DHR will collaborate with FWC to ensure proper natural resource management and site monitoring. The acquisition of game cameras and working with FWC law enforcement will help deter vandalism and improper site usage. The approximate cost for these initial efforts is estimated to be around \$2,500 and it is expected that the revenue source for this commitment will come from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund.

Public Use:

The property offers a wide range of recreational opportunities, including but not limited to wildlife viewing, birdwatching, and nature study. Following further investigatory efforts by DHR, historical and educational interpretive plans will be pursued to communicate the site's significance to the public. DHR envisions passive, nature-based recreational opportunities at the project parcel.

Management costs and sources of revenue:

It is anticipated that management funding will come from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. Estimated budget needs for interim management are as follows:

Salary: \$9,000 (10% of 2 FTEs; Archaeologist III, Senior Archaeologist)

Expense: \$2500 (Game cameras for vandalism monitoring)

OCO: \$4,211 (Annual operating costs)

Total: \$15,711

Partnerships in Management Activities:

As the primary partner in this project, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will work closely with the Division of Historical Resources (DHR) in managing the property. In addition to FWC, cooperation with other agencies, such as the Florida Forest Service (FFS), the Suwanee River Water Management District (SRWMD), and the National Park Service (NPS), will be explored to enhance resource management, recreational, and educational opportunities