

Florida Forever Project Evaluation Report

Creek Ranch Polk County



Acquisition Type: Fee Simple

Acres: 1,295

Just Value: \$3,839,967

Application Date: October 31, 2022

Project Sponsors: SVN – Saunders Ralston Dantzler

Prepared By:

Division of State Lands

Office of Environmental Services



Submitted to the Acquisition and Restoration Council

April 14, 2023

Executive Summary

The proposed Creek Ranch Florida Forever project contains 3 parcels, owned by Creek Legacy Ranch LLC, totaling 1,295 acres in eastern unincorporated Polk County. Creek Ranch is a working cattle ranch and horse farm located on County Highway 342, approximately nine miles southeast of Haines City and ten miles northeast of Lake Wales. The proposed project is adjacent to the existing Lake Hatchineha Watershed Florida Forever project. The landowners have expressed interest in wanting to further conservation efforts by selling this property to the state. The project is proposed as fee simple acquisition to be managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and has a total tax assessed value of \$3,839,967.

The property lies on the eastern flank of the Lake Wales Ridge complex, where the high ridges at the center of the peninsula give way to relatively flat marine terrace surrounding the Kissimmee River to the east. The property contains about 1,200 feet of frontage on Deer Lake; and approximately 1,000 feet of shoreline along Lake Hatchineha, part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, which form part of the headwaters of the Kissimmee River-Lake Okeechobee-Everglades system. The Creek Ranch property is located within the South Florida Water Management District's Upper Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Planning Area within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed and is part of the Kissimmee River Headwaters Revitalization Project. The property stands out due to its connectivity to existing conservation lands and if acquired would help complete a contiguous corridor of existing conservation lands surrounding Lake Hatchineha.

The property currently supports a cow/calf operation as well as private recreational hunting. Prescribed fire has occasionally been a management tool on the property. According to the Division of Historical Resources (DHR), the project contains no cultural resources listed in the Florida Master Site File or National Register of Historic Places. There is some potential for unrecorded sites to exist on Creek Ranch, however no professional surveys have been conducted within the project boundaries.

Most of the property consists of improved pasture interspersed with bands of natural vegetation, primarily disturbed wet flatwoods and mesic hammock. Most noteworthy are two areas of oak scrub that occur in the higher elevations in the western portion of the property. These scrub areas are in excellent condition. The property also contains wet flatwoods, a portion of a large basin swamp that fringes Lake Hatchineha, a scenic basin marsh along the shoreline of Deer Lake and isolated depression marshes scattered throughout the property.

Rare wildlife species documented on the property include gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*), and Florida scrub lizard. Rare plants species observed on site include cutthroatgrass (*Coleataenia abscissa*) and common wild pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*). Florida panthers (*Puma concolor coryi*) and Florida black bears (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) are known to occur in the surrounding landscape. The project area is located within Priority 2 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN).

An interagency team conducted a site visit to the project site on February 2, 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 considered as an amendment to the Lake Hatchineha Watershed Florida Forever project in the Critical Natural Lands category. All acres proposed for acquisition are considered essential due to the resources documented on the property (see Appendix C).

PURPOSE FOR ACQUISITION

The Creek Ranch project will complete a corridor of conservation lands and create a contiguous landscape-sized protection area surrounding Lake Hatchineha that will support and provide crucial habitat protection and connectivity for rare and endangered plant and animal species. The project will provide critical water quality and quantity protection for Lake Hatchineha and the Kissimmee River, and expand public outdoor resource-based recreational opportunities in a rapidly growing region of the state.

Acquisition of this project would serve to:

- increase the protection of Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community, and landscape levels
- 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
- increase natural resource-based public recreation or educational opportunities
- conserve and protect a portion of Florida's rural landscape in order to provide and enhance wildlife corridors for rare and imperiled species
- ensure that sufficient quantities of water are available to meet the current and future needs of natural systems and the citizens of the state

LOCATION AND PROXIMITY TO OTHER MANAGED AREAS

The Creek Ranch proposal includes a single contiguous block of 1,295 acres (per application; 1,291 as determined in GIS) on the eastern edge of Polk County approximately 9 miles southeast of Haines City and 10 miles northeast of Lake Wales.

The property is in a region of abundant managed lands; directly to the north are lands of the South Florida Water Management District's Kissimmee Chain of Lakes managed area and an unacquired portion of the Lake Hatchineha Watershed Florida Forever project; to the south the property abuts the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, the Hatchineha Ranch Mitigation Bank, the Lake Hatchineha Ranch Agricultural Conservation Easement, and additional lands of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. Through these connections, this property has the potential to protect a corridor around the western shore of Lake Hatchineha that includes Disney Wilderness Preserve, David Allen Broussard Catfish Creek State Park, and Lake Kissimmee State Park.

RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

This evaluation is based on information gathered from the proposal, aerial photography, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic maps, Cooperative Land Cover data (FL FWCC and FNAI, Florida Cooperative Land Cover Map, version 3.4), the FNAI database, and observations made during the field visit conducted on February 2, 2023. The property lies on

the eastern flank of the Lake Wales Ridge complex, where the high ridges at the center of the peninsula give way to relatively flat marine terrace surrounding the Kissimmee River to the east. To the northwest, the property contains about 1,200 feet of frontage on Deer Lake; it also borders wetlands on Lake Hatchineha, part of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, which form part of the headwaters of the Kissimmee River-Lake Okeechobee-Everglades system. The property is shaped generally like an elongate east-west rectangle with an irregularly-shaped inholding on the southern boundary. East and west of the inholding, the southern boundary fronts County Highway 342 for a total of about 1.3 miles. The elevation varies substantially from approximately 100 feet above mean sea level (MSL) at its highest point in the western portion of the property to a low of 50 feet near the shoreline of Lake Hatchineha on the northeast corner.

Approximately 40% of the proposal area is in natural vegetation. Wet flatwoods are the most abundant natural community on the site, mostly intergrading with mesic hammock in a band that extends north to south on the gentle slope between higher elevations in the western half of the property and the low eastern pastures near Lake Hatchineha. Much of what is mapped as wet flatwoods has been altered substantially, with more extensive hardwood canopy and lower diversity of herbaceous plants than would be typical of frequently-burned flatwoods. Canopy consists predominantly of slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) with occasional longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), with a moderate to dense midstory of live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), swamp laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*). Shrubs are intermittent, including swamp bay (*Persea palustris*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), gallberry (*Ilex glabra*), and highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*). The patchy herbaceous layer includes bluestem (*Andropogon* sp.), witchgrass (*Dichanthelium* sp.), mats of the endemic, state-endangered cutthroatgrass (*Coleataenia abscissa*), bottlebrush threeawn (*Aristida spiciformis*), and toothed midorus fern (*Telmatoblechnum serrulatum*).

Mesic flatwoods occupy about 10% of the property, particularly a significant area in the southeast corner of the western third of the property. Other smaller patches of mesic flatwoods occur surrounded by pasture near Deer Lake. Canopy consists of slash pine in some locations, and in others, mature flat-topped longleaf pine. Fire appears to have been excluded from the mesic flatwoods in recent years, allowing development of a sparse midstory of hardwoods such as sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*) near wetter flatwoods, or Chapman's oak (*Quercus chapmanii*) and sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*) nearer to scrub or scrubby flatwoods. Shrubs in the flatwoods are fairly dense, consisting of fetterbush (*Lyonia lucida*), rusty staggerbush (*Lyonia ferruginea*), southern bayberry (*Morella cerifera*), sand live oak, cabbage palm, saw palmetto, gallberry, and dwarf live oak (*Quercus minima*). Groundcover is patchy but generally diverse, including wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*), bluestem, big carpetgrass (*Axonopus furcatus*), fragrant eryngo (*Eryngium aromaticum*), slender flattop goldenrod (*Euthamia caroliniana*), St. John's wort (*Hypericum* sp.), blazing star (*Liatris* sp.), Feay's palafox (*Palafoxia feayi*), bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), lopsided indiagrass (*Sorghastrum secundum*), and bluecurls (*Trichostema* sp.)

Mesic hammock is found along the slight slope above the lowlands near Lake Hatchineha, in a mosaic with wet flatwoods. Some of the areas mapped as mesic hammock may have been wet flatwoods in the past. Mesic hammocks on the proposal site have canopy of water oak (*Quercus nigra*), live oak, and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*). An emergent layer of slash pine is typically present. Shrubs are sparse to dense and consist mostly of cabbage palm and saw

palmetto with some shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*). Herbs are infrequent and include bluestem and Caesar's weed (*Urena lobata*, FISC-I).

Scrubby flatwoods occur on patches of dry soils in the higher elevations of the western half of the site. These were observed to have a canopy of slash pine, with a dense shrub layer of tall myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*) and Chapman's oak. Shorter shrubs include dwarf live oak, saw palmetto, and myrtle oak. Herbaceous species such as bluestems, witchgrasses, wiregrass, deer moss (*Cladonia sp.*), pineland scalypink (*Stipulicida setacea*), and pinweed (*Lechea sp.*) occur in openings between patches of shrubs.

Two areas of oak scrub occur in the higher elevations in the western portion of the property. These communities are dominated by low-statured shrubs including sand live oak, Chapman's oak rusty staggerbush, fetterbush, saw palmetto, scrub oak (*Quercus inopina*), and scrub palmetto (*Sabal etonia*). A few young sand pines (*Pinus clausa*) are present, and both young and mature longleaf pines occur occasionally. Frequent sandy gaps between shrubs contain a variety of smaller plants, including gopher apple (*Geobalanus oblongifolius*), threeawn (*Aristida sp.*), reindeermoss, pineland scalypink, beaksedge (*Rhynchospora sp.*), witchgrass, wiregrass, St. John's wort, Feay's palaflox, October flower (*Polygonella polygama*), rosemary (*Conradina sp.*), pinebarren frostweed (*Crocanthemum corymbosum*), Apalachicola toadflax (*Linaria floridana*), pricklypear (*Opuntia austrina*), and rustweed (*Polypreum procumbens*). Scrub on this property is mostly in excellent condition, although a few areas are starting to resemble xeric hammock due to a long interval since fire. Evidence of wildlife observed during the site visit included bobcat and gopher tortoise tracks, and possible tracks of sand skink. A Florida scrub lizard was seen.

One baygall, occupying about 3% of the property, occurs embedded in the large patch of wet flatwoods along the northern boundary of the property. This swamp has a canopy and midstory of evergreen hardwoods, mainly loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*) and sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*), with a moderately dense shrub layer of swamp bay, fetterbush, cabbage palm, and laurel greenbrier (*Smilax laurifolia*). The herbaceous cover is a dense near-monoculture of invasive sword fern (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*), with a few native ferns (mainly cinnamon fern, *Osmunda cinnamomea*) interspersed.

The property contains some basin swamp, part of a larger swamp that fringes Lake Hatchineha. This area has a canopy of mature cypress (*Taxodium sp.*) with occasional red maple (*Acer rubrum*). Shrubs were absent. Patches of an emergent grass grew in the shallows, but these could not be observed closely enough to be identified.

Along the shore of Deer Lake at the northwestern part of the property is a broad fringing basin marsh containing bluestem, torpedo grass (*Panicum repens*, FISC-I), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), sand cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*), with some Peruvian primrosewillow (*Ludwigia peruviana*, FISC-I), and southern bayberry. Additional areas of basin marsh also are likely along Lake Hatchineha but were not seen during the site visit.

Small, isolated depression marshes are found scattered through the pastures and flatwoods on the property, making up a total of about 2% of the proposal area. Some that were seen during the site visit were relatively undisturbed and mostly dominated by native herbaceous species, including beaksedge, pickerelweed, soft rush (*Juncus effusus ssp. solutus*), maidencane (*Panicum hemitomom*), blue maidencane (*Amphicarpum muehlenbergianum*), purple bluestem

(*Andropogon glomeratus* var. *glaucopsis*), smooth beggarticks (*Bidens laevis*), spadeleaf (*Centella asiatica*), flatsedge (*Cyperus* sp.), spikerush (*Eleocharis* sp.), marshpennywort (*Hydrocotyle* sp.), and yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris* sp.). Some marshes showed evidence of disturbance: hog rooting was ongoing in one marsh, while invasive dwarf papyrus (*Cyperus prolifer*) was observed to be established on the bank of another marsh that was partially excavated sometime in the past.

One large dome swamp was visited during the site assessment; this is mostly surrounded by pasture, and has a canopy of pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) with younger pond cypress in the midstory. Herbaceous plants such as pickerelweed, lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*) and marshpennywort grow in the shallow water in the swamp, while soft rush, big carpetgrass (*Axonopus furcatus*), dayflower (*Commelina* sp.), and witchgrass (*Dichanthelium* sp.) grow in exposed soil on hummocks and at the swamp's edge.

Just under half of the proposal area is improved pasture. These grazing areas make up most of the western third of the property, as well as about half of the narrow central part, and a broad north-south band near Lake Hatchineha. Pastures are generally planted in bahiagrass, but also contain bluestems and West Indian dropseed (*Sporobolus jacquemontii*, FISC-I). Marshpennywort and soft rush are common components of the wet pastures in the eastern part of the proposal, and widely-spaced pond cypress and live oak occur. These low-lying eastern pastures have been extensively ditched for drainage, while some of the pasture further west show evidence of being bedded, reportedly as part of a former owner's plan for a peach orchard which was never planted.

There are about 78 acres of slash pine plantation (6% of the site) along the western edge of the property south of Deer Lake. These were not observed in detail, but in addition to the planted pine, various shrubs and herbs were noted including southern bayberry, saw palmetto, bluestem, bahiagrass, and blackberry (*Rubus* sp.).

About 3% of the property is classified as semi-improved pasture. These areas typically have bahiagrass intermixed with patches of native species; examples in the western uplands of the proposal area have a canopy of slash pine and subcanopy of sand live oak with other remnant flatwoods shrubs such as saw palmetto, myrtle oak, dwarf live oak, gopher apple and a diversity of native herbs including slender flattop goldenrod (*Euthamia caroliniana*), lopsided indiagrass (*Sorghastrum secundum*), tall elephantsfoot (*Elephantopus elatus*), Elliott's milkpea (*Galactia elliotii*), skeletongrass (*Gymnopogon* sp.), and crowngrass (*Paspalum* sp.). Semi-improved pastures in the lower elevations nearer the lake typically are less diverse, consisting of live oak and cabbage palm with bahiagrass and native grasses such as thin paspalum (*Paspalum setaceum*).

Several small developed areas are present; the most noteworthy is a large residential structure adjacent to Lake Hatchineha, with an impounded pond, landscaping including queen palm (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*, FISC II), bamboo, and bottlebrush tree (*Melaleuca viminalis*, FISC II), and a dock with a pavilion over the lake. A garage for equipment storage is located near the center of the property. There is also a handful of small artificial ponds in the upper pasture, a system of unpaved roads, and a system of drainage ditches.

Invasive plants are relatively infrequent on the proposal site. The most notable infestations observed during the site visit were a variety of invasive plants bordering canals in the eastern

part of the property, including cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*, FISC-I), and the sword fern dominating the baygall wetland. Caesar’s weed was fairly widespread but generally not dense, and a handful of other invasive species were observed to occur sporadically.

Table 1. Natural communities and landcover types within Florida Forever proposal

Community or Landcover	Acres	Percent of Proposal
wet flatwoods	181	14
mesic flatwoods	131	10
mesic hammock	59	5
scrub	54	4
baygall	35	3
depression marsh	23	2
scrubby flatwoods	14	1
basin marsh	10	<1
dome swamp	9	<1
basin swamp	3	<1
marsh lake	1	<1
pasture—improved	613	48
pine plantation	78	6
pasture—semi-improved	37	3
canal/ditch	17	1
developed	17	1
impoundment	5	<1
artificial pond	3	<1

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

This resource assessment of the Creek Ranch Florida Forever proposal is based on field observations during the site visit and results of GIS analysis. The proposal contains approximately 1,000 feet of lakefront on Lake Hatchineha within a complex of conservation lands and fills an important gap in the conservation landscape west of the lake.

Creek Ranch is a working cattle ranch, with approximately 350 head of cattle in a cow/calf operation located on the northwestern shore of Lake Hatchineha. Approximately 578 acres are improved pasture (45%), and 319 acres are wet flatwoods (25%). Coniferous plantation (139 acres), rural - unimproved/woodland pasture (48 acres), and mesic flatwoods (36 acres) comprise 11%, 4%, and 3% of the landcover, respectively. Oak scrub and scrub comprise approximately 56 acres of the landcover (2.25%). The remaining landcover types each comprise less than 1.5%.

The eastern half of the property is primarily improved pasture and wet flatwoods, with small marshes interspersed throughout. The western half of the property is primarily improved pasture with tree plantations, scrub, and wet flatwoods around the perimeter.

Prescribed fire has occasionally been a management tool on the property, as evidenced by the presence of fire scars on trees. The dominant native communities are the areas considered fire-dependent and would benefit from more frequent prescribed fire. The landowner indicated intention to work with the Florida Forest Service to increase the use of prescribed fire. Pastures are relatively open, with snags and trees to provide perching and roosting habitat for wildlife. Invasive non-native plant species do not appear to be a widespread issue, aside from the non-native pasture grasses. Small patches of cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) and climbing fern (*Lygodium sp.*) were observed during the site assessment.

Wildlife species observed during the tour included Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*), eastern meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*), red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), southern bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Florida scrub lizard (*Sceloporus woodi*), and many other species. Feral hog (*Sus scrofa*) signs were observed. The landowner also reports that the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), southern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*), and crested caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) have been observed on-site. The pastures are suitable for use by other listed wildlife such as the northern crested caracara and southeastern American kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*). These species were not observed during the field tour but are known to occur in the surrounding landscape.

This is a well-kept property that is located within a larger landscape of lands critical to the long-range conservation of wildlife and natural communities. The project also improves connectivity between existing conservation lands on the western side of Lake Hatchineha. Florida panthers (*Puma concolor coryi*) and Florida black bears (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) are known to occur in the surrounding landscape and protection of the property in the long-term would be very beneficial to these wide-ranging imperiled species.

The FWC GIS analysis of the Cooperative Land Cover v3.6 indicates that 81% of the property is within priorities 1-2 of the Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project – Terrestrial and Waters. The FWC Florida Landscape Assessment Model (FLAM) is a GIS-based assessment tool that incorporates a wide variety of land cover and wildlife species data in identifying important wildlife habitats. The FLAM model has a ranking of 0-10; a rank of 10 being of greatest value. The mean FLAM score for this property is 7.8. The analysis also shows approximately 92% of the property has an imperiled species richness for 5-9 species. Additionally, there are confirmed records of a bald eagle nest and gopher tortoise. The entire property is also designated as occasional black bear range.

Approximately 82% of the property lies within a designated FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area (SHCA) for species including the Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), American swallow-tailed kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), and short-tailed hawk (*Buteo brachyurus*); and 66% of the property includes habitat suitable for Florida sandhill cranes. The entire property provides water protection for several streams including Catfish Creek, Lake Hatchineha, and Lake Marion streams, which are all classified as 3F surface waters.

In summary, conservation of the property would increase the amount of protected area and connectivity between established conservation lands in the greater landscape and protect existing native lands from development. A habitat management program that incorporates routine prescribed fire, particularly within native habitats will improve and maintain conditions in native habitat and benefit many imperiled wildlife species. The project lies within a landscape

that is increasingly under pressure from expansion of nearby suburban population areas. Long-term protection of intact lands such as Creek Ranch is vital to the long-term persistence of wildlife in this region.

GOALS, MEASURES AND CRITERIA

GOAL A:

ENHANCE THE COORDINATION AND COMPLETION OF LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS

Measure A1:

The number of acres acquired through the state's land acquisition programs that contribute to the enhancement of essential natural resources, ecosystem service parcels, and connecting linkage corridors as identified and developed by the best available scientific data.

If acquired, all 1,295 acres of the project proposal would contribute to the enhancement of essential natural resources, ecosystem service parcels and connecting linkage corridors. The project will connect existing conservation areas surrounding Lake Hatchineha, and contribute to a contiguous landscape-sized protection area of >495,000 acres.

Measure A3:

The number of shared acquisition projects among Florida Forever funding partners and partners with other funding sources, including local governments and the federal government.

No funding partners have been identified for this project.

GOAL B:

INCREASE THE PROTECTION OF FLORIDA'S BIODIVERSITY AT THE SPECIES, NATURAL COMMUNITY, AND LANDSCAPE LEVELS

Measure B1:

The number of acres acquired of significant Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas.

The SHCA Florida Forever Conservation Needs layer identifies important remaining habitat conservation needs for 62 terrestrial vertebrates on private lands. Priority 1 and 2 represent habitat for species considered imperiled or critically imperiled in Florida. The Florida Forever Measure Evaluation (FFME) table (Appendix B) reports the site contains approximately 1,282 acres (99% of site) of SHCAs. This is primarily within Priority 1 (89% of site), with the remainder in Priority 2 (10%), Priority 3 (<1%) and Priority 5 (<1%).

Measure B2:

The number of acres acquired of highest priority conservation areas for Florida's rarest species.

Habitat conservation priorities for 634 of Florida's rarest species were mapped and divided into six priority classes. The FFME reports the proposed project contains approximately 1,247 acres (97% of site) of rare species habitat. The habitat is mostly divided between Priority 5 (47% of site) and Priority 6 (29%), with the remainder in Priorities 4 and 3 (18% and 3%, respectively).

Table 2 lists the acres of habitat for each species that may be found on the site, based on the FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities. Please note that habitats for these species overlap, so

that the sum total of habitat for all species is more than the total acreage of the priority conservation areas. Acreage for aquatic species includes a terrestrial buffer.

Table 2. Rare species habitat based on FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities

Scientific Name	Common Name	Global Rank	Acres
<i>Coleataenia abscissa</i>	cutthroatgrass	G3	165
<i>Drymarchon couperi</i>	eastern indigo snake	G3	147
<i>Sceloporus woodi</i>	Florida scrub lizard	G2G3	91
<i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>	Florida scrub-jay	G1G2	3
<i>Caracara plancus</i>	crested caracara	G5	< 1
<i>Mycteria americana</i>	wood stork	G4	25
<i>Mustela frenata peninsulæ</i>	Florida long-tailed weasel	G5T3?	1,096

Measure B3:

The number of acres acquired of significant landscapes, landscape linkages, and conservation corridors, giving priority to completing linkages

The FFME reports approximately 1,291 acres (100%) of the proposed project contributes to protection of ecological greenways within Priority 2 areas. Prioritization is based on such factors as importance for wide-ranging species like Florida panther and Florida black bear, importance for maintaining a connected reserve network, and riparian corridors.

Measure B4:

The number of acres acquired of under-represented native ecosystems.

The Florida Forever natural community analysis includes only those communities that are under-represented on existing conservation lands. This analysis provides a conservative estimate of the extent of these communities, because it identifies only relatively undisturbed portions of these communities that occur within their historic range. The FFME lists the acreages of under-represented natural communities found on the site. Based on this analysis, the Creek Ranch Conservation Easement proposal contains 312 acres of mesic and wet flatwoods (24% of site) and 68 acres of scrub and scrubby flatwoods (5% of site).

Measure B5:

The number of landscape-sized protection areas of at least 50,000 acres that exhibit a mosaic of predominantly intact or restorable natural communities established through new acquisition projects, or augmentations to previous projects.

The Creek Ranch proposal, along with adjacent conservation lands that include the Disney Wilderness Preserve, Catfish Creek Preserve State Park, Avon Park Air Force Range, Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, and Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area, would contribute to a contiguous landscape-sized protection area of >495,000 acres.

Measure B6:

The percentage increase in the number of occurrences of imperiled species on publicly managed conservation areas.

This site provides habitat or potential habitat for several species of conservation concern. Active gopher tortoise burrows and a Florida scrub lizard were observed during the site visit. The site is within an area where Florida black bear is considered common. Additional species reported from the property but not seen during the site assessment are listed in the table below. Other imperiled wildlife species may use the property as well.

Two listed plant species were seen during the site visit, cutthroat grass in the wet flatwoods and common wild pine on oaks in the hammock and semi-improved pasture. However, the site visit took place during a season when many plants are dormant, so additional surveys, particularly in other times of year, could reveal other rare plants onsite.

Table 3 contains species falling into observational categories, as well as species gleaned from other sources (e.g., Florida Breeding Bird Atlas) with different degrees of locational precision. The FFME lists the number of Element Occurrences by Global Rank (G-rank) that are found on the proposal. Note that the number of occurrences does not necessarily match the number of species in the following table because a) some species may have more than one occurrence on the proposal site, or b) some species observed on site do not meet the criteria for addition to the FNAI database at this time.

Table 3. Rare plants and animals documented or reported to occur within the proposed project

Scientific Name	Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Federal Status	State Status
Rare plants documented on site					
<i>Coleataenia abscissa</i>	cutthroatgrass	G3*	S3	N	E
<i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i>	common wild pine	G5	SNR	N	E
Rare animals documented on site					
<i>Sceloporus woodi</i>	Florida scrub lizard	G2G3	S2S3	N	N
<i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	gopher tortoise	G3	S3	N	ST
<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	bald eagle	G5	S3	N	N
<i>Ursus americanus floridanus</i>	Florida black bear	G5T4	S4	N	N
Additional rare animals reported on site by applicant					
<i>Puma concolor coryi</i>	Florida panther	G5T1	S1	E	FE

GOAL C:**PROTECT, RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF NATURAL FUNCTIONS OF LAND, WATER, AND WETLAND SYSTEMS OF THE STATE****Measure C1:**

The number of acres of publicly-owned land identified as needing restoration; enhancement, and management, acres undergoing restoration or enhancement; acres with restoration activities completed, and acres managed to maintain such restored or enhanced conditions; the number of acres which represent actual or potential imperiled species habitat; the number of acres which are available pursuant to a management plan to restore, enhance, repopulate, and manage imperiled species habitat; and the number of acres of imperiled species habitat managed, restored, and enhanced, repopulated, or acquired.

The approximately 520 acres of natural communities are mostly in moderately good ecological condition, though declining in health somewhat from lack of fire. The pasture making up the majority of the property would require considerable long-term commitment to restore to native species.

The invasive plant control needs on the property appear to be relatively minor, based on the moderately low populations observed during the site visit. Cogon grass should be treated aggressively to halt further increases, as this species can spread rapidly and threaten the integrity of natural communities on the site. Coral ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*, FISC-I), Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*, FISC-I), and Peruvian primrose willow, among other species, occur sporadically. A baseline assessment to determine the full extent of invasive species is warranted if acquisition of an easement occurs.

Measure C4:

The number of acres acquired that protect natural floodplain functions.

The FFME reports approximately 430 acres (33%) of the proposed project may contribute to the protection of natural floodplain function. The majority of this area is in Priority 4 (24% of site), with the remainder in Priority 5 (5%), Priority 3 (4%), and Priority 2 (<1%). Priority 1 areas are the most natural with the lowest intensity land uses.

Measure C5:

The number of acres acquired that protect surface waters of the State.

The FFME reports approximately 1,291 acres (100%) of the proposed project could provide protection for those surface waters of the State that currently remain in good condition. The majority of this area is in Priority 4 (88% of site), with the remainder in Priority 2 (12%). These areas represent acreage that contributes to the protection of state-designated Outstanding Florida Waters, springs, rare fish habitat, or other surface waters.

Measure C8:

The number of acres of functional wetland systems protected.

The FFME reports approximately 407 acres (32%) of the proposed project would provide protection for functional wetland systems. This area is divided between Priority 4 (19% of site), and Priority 3 (9%), with the remainder in Priority 5 (2%) and Priority 2 (1%). Priority 1 areas are the most natural with the lowest intensity land uses.

GOAL D:

ENSURE THAT SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES OF WATER ARE AVAILABLE TO MEET THE CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF NATURAL SYSTEMS AND THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE

Measure D1:

The number of acres acquired which provide retention and storage of surface water in naturally occurring storage areas, such as lakes and wetlands, consistent with the maintenance of water resources or water supplies and consistent with district water supply plans.

The Creek Ranch property is located within the South Florida Water Management District’s Upper Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Planning Area which is part of the Central Florida Water Initiative. The property is not specifically included in any water resource development project listed in the water supply plan. However, the property contains approximately 117 acres of wetland plant communities or water features that provide hydrologic benefits through surface water storage and retention and groundwater recharge. Retaining these features would be consistent with the District’s water supply plan.

Measure D2:

The quantity of water made available through the water resource development component of a district water supply plan for which a water management district is responsible.

The Creek Ranch property is located in the Upper Kissimmee Sub-watershed within the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. The property is within the boundary of the Kissimmee River Headwaters Revitalization Project that is listed as a water resource development project in the Lower Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Plan. The purpose of this project is to increase water storage in the Upper Kissimmee Sub-watershed to ensure adequate water is available to provide sufficient flow for the successful restoration of the Kissimmee River. The Creek Ranch property is not specifically identified in the project plan. However, ensuring that the wetland plant communities remain intact, this property would be expected to retain somewhere between 100 to 200 acre-feet of water storage.

Measure D3:

The number of acres acquired of groundwater recharge areas critical to springs, sinks, aquifers, other natural systems, or water supply.

Recharge of the Surficial Aquifer System is primarily rain driven and the Creek Ranch property would provide 1,295 acres of potential recharge area. The FFME reports approximately 1,292 acres (100%) of the proposed project would provide protection for groundwater recharge areas. This area is divided between Priority 4 (49% of site), Priority 3 (47%), and Priority 2 (4%). Prioritization is based on features that contribute to aquifer vulnerability such as swallets, thickness of the intermediate aquifer confining unit and closed topographical depressions, as well as areas within springshed protection zones and in proximity to public water supply wells.

Table 4. Spatial Analysis for Potential Water Quality Benefits of Avalon Phase II

Categories	Scoring Criteria	Project Score
DEP High Profile Springs (In 1,2,3 or > spring sheds)	12, 24, 36	0
DEP Select Agricultural Land Use (0-30%, >30-65%, >65%)	4,8,12	12

DEP Florida Aquifer Vulnerability (FAVA)	4,7,10	10
DEP Special Nutrient Impaired WBIDs	9	9
DEP Distance to Major Lakes (100, 500, 1000 meters)	8,7,6	8
DEP Springsheds or within 5 miles	10, 7	0
DEP BMAPs	10	10
DEP Distance to Major Rivers (100, 500, 1000 meters)	6,5,4	0
Total Possible	101	49

GIS Evaluation score is converted to a 1 to 5 value (low to high),

FINAL DEAR SCORE = 4 medium/high water quality protection benefits

GOAL E:

INCREASE NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED PUBLIC RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Measure E1:

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

There are approximately 1,295 acres in this acquisition that would be available for natural resource-based public recreation or education as managed by the FWC. Details on potential recreational activities can be found in Appendix D. The resources found on the property would be compatible with camping, horseback riding, hunting, paddling, and fishing. The property could also support Operation Outdoor Freedom events for disabled veterans sponsored by the Florida Forest Service (FFS).

Measure E3:

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

The property contains facilities that could be utilized for land management and recreation including a large equipment barn, fencing, gates and service roads.

GOAL F:

PRESERVE SIGNIFICANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORIC SITES

Measure F1:

The increase in the number of and percentage of historic and archaeological properties listed in the Florida Master Site File or National Register of Historic Places which are protected or preserved for public use.

The Creek Ranch Florida Forever project would not meet Measure F1 as the project contains no cultural resources listed in the Florida Master Site File or National Register of Historic Places.

Measure F2:

The increase in the number and percentage of historic and archaeological properties that are in state ownership.

The Creek Ranch Florida Forever project would not meet Measure F2 as the project contains no cultural resources recorded or known to exist. However, should cultural resources be identified at Creek Ranch they would be protected under public ownership.

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

There are no cultural resources recorded or known to exist on this Florida Forever project. To date, this property has not been professionally surveyed for archaeological and/or historical sites. It is therefore possible that undocumented cultural resources exist on the property, but this cannot be determined without formal survey of the entire property.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS:

During the Field Review of the Creek Ranch Florida Forever project, staff did not observe any unrecorded cultural resources within the project area. However, based on an evaluation of the location and distribution of cultural resources in the surrounding area, there is potential for numerous unrecorded sites to exist on the Creek Ranch property. Should any artifacts or other cultural resources be discovered on the project in the future, DHR recommends leaving them in place and contacting DHR's Public Lands Archaeology Program for further evaluation.

GOAL G:

INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF FORESTLAND AVAILABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Measure G1:

The number of acres acquired that are available for sustainable forest management.

Approximately 560 acres of the forested natural communities on the property are being managed sustainably. Among pine stands on the site (approximately 460 acres), multiple age classes exist. Some stands previously received a first thinning; other stands will be ready to thin in the near future. One pine stand still requires some wait time before thinning is economically feasible due to sub merchantable sized trees. All of these stands need fire and have significant hardwood competition in the midstory and understory. Thick duff layers exist in most cases, as stands have not received prescribed fire in quite some time. Scrub on this property would benefit from fire but is in good shape with adequate bare sand and forb coverage as well as oak heights between 3-10 ft. This site would benefit from further attention to forest timber management. Non-productive forest types make up the remaining forested types including oak and sand pine scrub, scrubby flatwoods, cypress dome swamps, and mesic hammock.

The FFME reports approximately 916 acres (71% of site) could be available for sustainable forest management, divided between Priority 5 (732 acres) and Priority 3 (184 acres). Prioritization is based on 4 criteria set by the Florida Forest Service: whether trees are natural or planted, size of tract, distance to market, and hydrology. Priority 5 areas are considered "potential" pinelands; agricultural areas that could be restored to pineland.

Measure G2:

The number of acres of state owned forestland managed for economic return in accordance with current best management practices.

Approximately 460 acres on this property are productive pine stands. The majority of these are merchantable size while one stand is still pre-merchantable. These stands mostly consist of planted slash pine across 3 apparent age groups and appear to be managed using current best management practices for silviculture.

Measure G4:

The percentage and number of acres identified for restoration actually restored by reforestation.

Most acreage onsite does not need restoration, just maintenance. Hydrology in wet flatwoods should be monitored within transitional areas due to the existence of cutthroatgrass, a state listed species. This grass is very sensitive to fire exclusion and changes in hydrology. It does very well with thinning followed by burning. Cutthroatgrass has a very limited range and its habitat has been decreasing due to development and fire exclusion. The cutthroat variant of wet flatwoods is an imperiled natural community and should be maintained where it exists and restored in adjacent areas. Proper flatwoods management including harvesting and burning should increase the abundance of this species. Prescribed fire would greatly benefit the areas of scrub and endemic flora species that are contained within the project .

FLORIDA FOREVER CRITERIA

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

- The project meets multiple goals,
- The project is part of an ongoing governmental effort to restore, protect, or develop land areas or water resources.
- The project enhances or facilitates management of properties already under public ownership.
- The project has a significant portion of its land area in imminent danger of development, in imminent danger of losing its significant natural attributes or recreational open space, or in imminent danger of subdivision which would result in multiple ownership and make acquisition of the project costly or less likely to be accomplished.
- The project contributes to the solution of water resource problems on a regional basis.

The Acquisition and Restoration Council shall give increased priority to:

- Projects that contribute to improving the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater.

MANAGEMENT

The Creek Ranch project is proposed to be managed by the FWC as a wildlife management area. Please see Appendix D for the Management Prospectus.

FUNDING SOURCES

Florida Forever

OWNERSHIP PATTERN AND ACQUISITION PLANNING**Title and Legal Access, Jurisdictional and Sovereignty Lands, Legal Issues**

Record of title, a designation of jurisdictional and sovereignty lands and any other legal Issues will be determined at the time of acquisition and are not known at this time.

Known Encumbrances (easement, long-term leases, restrictive covenants, etc.)

The easements and encumbrances of record would be determined during the appraisal mapping. A current title insurance commitment would be obtained, or the owner's title

insurance policy would be reviewed if the policy is available. The easements and encumbrances would be depicted or noted on the appraisal map.

Description and location of hazardous waste sites, dumps, borrow pits

There are no apparent contamination sites within the project based on the application form.

Estimated Cost of Appraisal and Mapping

DEP Bureau of Appraisal estimates \$10,000 to \$20,000 in appraisal fees.

Acquisition Phases

Subject to funding, the Creek Ranch Florida Forever project will be phased based upon price.

GOVERNMENT PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT

Contribution to Recreation and Open Space Needs

The proposal has moderate potential for contributing to recreation and open space needs due to its current use and location of the property. According to the application, "Creek Ranch is Old Florida Ranch land at its finest - a working cattle ranch and horse farm with an abundance of privacy and nature. The cattle ranch and horse farm infrastructure provide a complete working compound with horse stables, cow pens, pastures, four homes, shop, boathouse, docks, and great recreational opportunities. Internal dirt and grass roads are well maintained and weave throughout the property.

Current and historic activities on the property include hunting, fishing, commercial cattle operations, equestrian activities, silviculture, recreation, and private use and enjoyment.

Potential for Losing Significant Natural Attributes or Recreational Open Spaces

The property is in a region of abundant managed lands; directly to the north are lands of the South Florida Water Management District's Kissimmee Chain of Lakes managed area and an unacquired portion of the Lake Hatchineha Watershed Florida Forever project; to the south the property abuts the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, the Hatchineha Ranch mitigation bank, the Lake Hatchineha Ranch Agricultural Conservation Easement, and additional lands of the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. Through these connections, this property has the potential to protect a corridor along the western shore of Lake Hatchineha that includes Disney Wilderness Preserve, David Allen Broussard Catfish Creek State Park, and Lake Kissimmee State Park.

High Potential: The potential for losing significant natural attributes located on the property due to urban development is high as large rural residential communities are becoming increasingly common and are encroaching on the proposed project area.

Potential for Being Subdivided

Moderate Potential: The future land use designation allows for a limited amount of residential development. The application states that Creek Ranch is at the south end of the Orlando Metropolitan area and is in the pathway of development. Acquisition of the property under an easement would protect it from future development as seen bordering the property and prevent further fragmentation of sensitive habitat that supports many native species to Florida.

Acquisition would also protect the water quality and quantity of the region and the Everglade's Headwaters.

Zoning and Densities within the Project Boundaries

The subject property is zoned as Agriculture/Residential-Rural.

Existing Land Uses and Future Land Use Designations

Existing Land Uses: The subject property is classified with the following land use/land cover with a variety of natural communities: pasture-improved (613 acres); wet flatwoods (274 acres); mesic flatwoods (103 acres); pine plantation (78 acres); scrub (57 acres); baygall (35 acres); impoundment (35 acres); pasture-semi-improved (25 acres); depression marsh (22 acres); scrubby flatwoods (19 acres); succession al hardwood forest (18 acres); developed (16 acres); basin marsh (10 acres); dome swamp (8 acres); artificial pond (3 acres); basin swamp (2 acres); canal/ditch (1 acre); and marsh lake (1 acre).

Future Land Uses: The subject property is designated as Agriculture/Residential-Rural on the Polk County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) (see Map B). Based on the Polk County future land use designation, Agriculture/Residential-Rural (one dwelling unit per five acres), the subject property has a residential development potential of 260 dwelling units.

Development Potential

Based on the Polk County Comprehensive Plan future land use designation, Agriculture/Residential-Rural (one dwelling unit per five acres), the subject property has a residential development potential of 260 dwelling units.

Transportation Planning Issues

This project falls within Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 1. FDOT finds no adverse impacts from the proposed project.

Ongoing Governmental Efforts

The Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) is a collaborative water supply planning effort among the state's three largest water management districts, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS) and water utilities, environmental groups, business organizations, agricultural communities and other stakeholders. The CFWI Planning Area covers five counties, including Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole and southern Lake. There are several water management challenges in the CFWI region, including: Reaching sustainable groundwater limits; Multiple demands on the area's water resources; Overlapping regulatory programs.

Traditional fresh groundwater resources alone cannot meet future water demands or current permitted allocations without resulting in unacceptable impacts to water resources and related natural systems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Staff in DEP's Division of State Lands (DSL) and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory determined the final project recommendations. Sine Murray in DSL's Office of Environmental Services was responsible for the overall coordination of this report, with contributions from the following:

- Division of Historical Resources – Brandon Ackerman, Jason O'Donoghue

- Florida Forest Service – Cat Ingram, Nathan Bartosek
- Department of Economic Opportunity – Barbara Powell
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission – Susie Nuttall, Jennifer Myers
- Florida Natural Areas Inventory – Geoffrey Parks, Geena Davis & Nathan Pasco
- DEP Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration – Ken Weaver
- Florida Department of Transportation – Ben Naselius
- South Florida Water Management District - Justin Schuette, Ayounga Riddick

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Final FF measures table: Report requirement 259.105 (15)d, prepared by Florida Natural Areas Inventory

Creek Ranch: Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20230224

GIS ACRES = 1,291

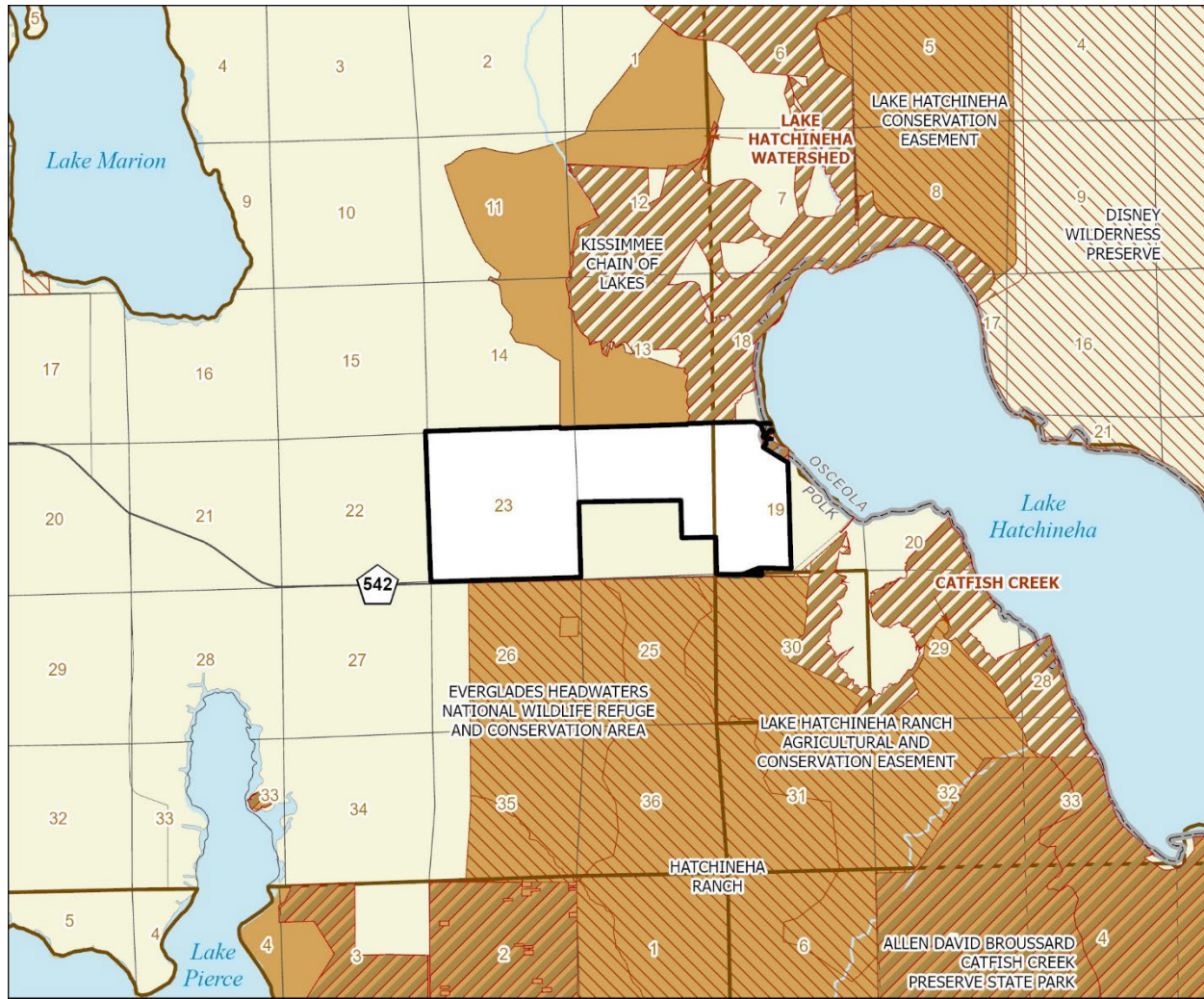
MEASURES	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	1,149	89%
Priority 2	125	10%
Priority 3	7	< 1%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	1	< 1%
Total Acres	1,282	99%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	39	3%
Priority 4	230	18%
Priority 5	605	47%
Priority 6	373	29%
Total Acres	1,247	97%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	1,291	100%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Total Acres	1,291	100%
B4: Under-represented Natural Communities		
Upland Glade (G1)	0	0%
Pine Rockland (G1)	0	0%
Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2)	68	5%
Rockland Hammock (G2)	0	0%
Dry Prairie (G2)	0	0%
Seepage Slope (G2)	0	0%
Sandhill (G3)	0	0%
Sandhill Upland Lake (G3)	0	0%
Upland Pine (G3)	0	0%
Mesic/Wet Flatwoods (G4)	312	24%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	0	0%
Total Acres	380	29%
B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species		
G1	0	
G2	1	
G3	2	
G4	1	
G5	1	
Total	5	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	8	< 1%
Priority 3	54	4%
Priority 4	307	24%
Priority 5	61	5%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	430	33%

MEASURES (continued)	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
C5: Surface Water Protection		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	152	12%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	1,138	88%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Priority 7	0	0%
Total Acres	1,289	100%
C7: Fragile Coastal Resources		
Fragile Coastal Uplands	0	0%
Imperiled Coastal Lakes	0	0%
Coastal Wetlands	0	0%
Total Acres	0	0%
C8: Functional Wetlands		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	13	1%
Priority 3	119	9%
Priority 4	252	19%
Priority 5	23	2%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	407	32%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	51	4%
Priority 3	606	47%
Priority 4	635	49%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	1,292	100%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles)		
<small>(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)</small>		
Land Trail Priorities	0.0	
Land Trail Opportunities	0.0	
Total Miles	0.0	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)		
	0 sites	
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	184	14%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands	732	57%
Total Acres	916	71%
G3: Forestland for Recharge		
	120	9%

^aAcres of each resource in the project and percentage of project represented by each resource are listed except where noted. This analysis converts site boundary into pixels, which causes slight differences from GIS acres; this effect is most noticeable on small sites.

Appendix B:

Final FF proposal boundary maps: Report requirement 259.105 (15)k, prepared by Florida Natural Areas Inventory



CREEK RANCH FLORIDA FOREVER PROPOSAL

POLK COUNTY

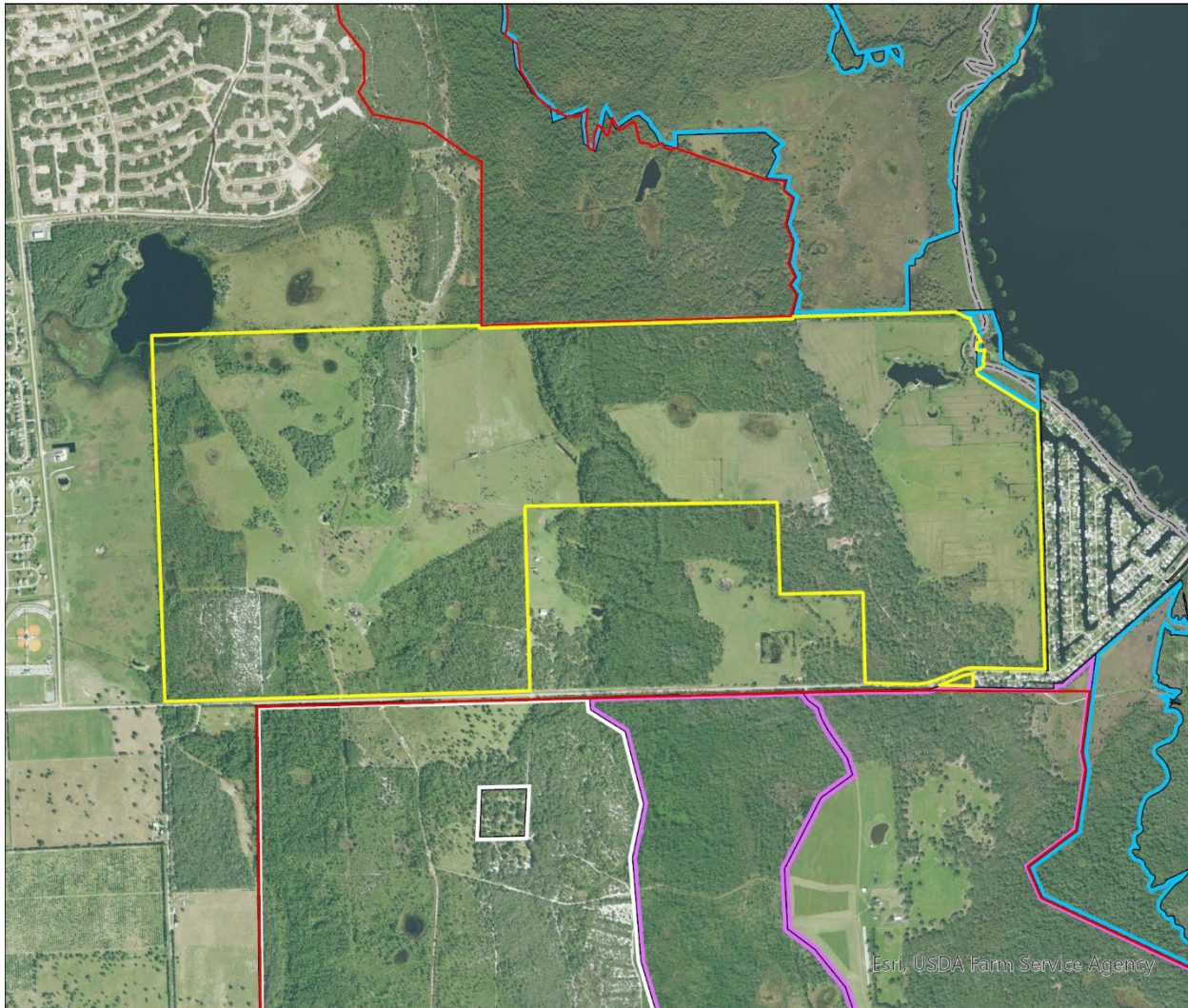
-  Florida Forever Proposal
-  Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  State Owned Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  State Aquatic Preserve



MAP BY FL NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY FEBRUARY 2023

Creek Ranch Florida Forever Proposal

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSAL BOUNDARY AS OF FEBRUARY 2023



Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, February 2023

Background: USDA NAIP Imagery Resolution = 1.0 meter



Appendix C:

PROPERTY ID #'S FOR FINAL RECOMMENDED BOUNDARY

COUNTY	PARCEL ID	OWNER	ACRES PER TAX CARD	JUST VALUE	ASSESSED VALUE	PARCEL DESIGNATION
Polk	28-28-23-000000-000000	Creek Legacy Ranch LLC	658.76	\$407,092.00	\$119,122.00	Essential
Polk	28-28-24-000000-010000	Creek Legacy Ranch LLC	337.45	\$1,489,670.00	\$249,646.00	Essential
Polk	29-28-19-000000-030000	Creek Legacy Ranch LLC	298.75	\$1,943,205.00	\$1,102,775.00	Essential
			1,294.69	\$3,839,967.00	\$1,471,543.00	

Appendix D:

Management Prospectus for Carter Quail Ranch, 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.*

Management Prospectus**Creek Ranch Florida Forever Project****Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission****March 2023****Management Intent**

Management of wildlife on Creek Ranch (CR) will include efforts designed to perpetuate all species of wildlife native to the area. The FWC will manage CR under the multiple-use concept as a Wildlife Management Area. CR will provide fish and wildlife resource-based public outdoor recreation and educational opportunities, while protecting the natural and cultural resources.

All requirements of the Management Procedures document from the Division of Historical Resources (DHR) will be followed with regard to any potential ground disturbing activities. All the CR's natural and historical resources would be managed for the purposes of acquisition included within the Florida Forever Act and Chapters 253 and 259, F.S., under a management plan approved by the Acquisition and Restoration Council.

The FWC uses a comprehensive resource management approach on FWC-managed areas. Restoring the form and function of Florida's natural communities is the foundation of this management philosophy. The FWC uses Objective-based Vegetation Management (OBVM) to monitor how specific vegetative attributes are responding to FWC management. The OBVM includes the delineation of management units and the quantification of desired future conditions for each actively managed natural community.

Additionally, as another critical component of this comprehensive resource management approach, the FWC uses the Wildlife Conservation Prioritization and Recovery (WCPR) program to ensure that management is having the desired effect on wildlife. The goal of the WCPR program is to provide assessment, recovery, and planning support for FWC-managed

areas to enhance management of locally important species and recovery of imperiled species. The WCPR program objectives include prioritizing what the FWC does for imperiled and locally important species on FWC-managed areas; ensuring the actions taken on these areas are part of statewide conservation programs and priorities; and informing others about the work accomplished on lands that the FWC manages.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Resources described in this management prospectus indicate conditions affecting intensity of management. These include natural community types, topography and soils, surface and ground water conditions, extent of historic disturbance, and already existing improvements. Environmentally sensitive areas, such as erosion-prone sites, important habitats, outstanding natural areas, and wetlands shall be identified, appropriately managed, and protected.

The FWC conducts analyses of historic vegetation of natural community types when necessary to determine appropriate desired future conditions. Upland wildlife management concentrates on appropriate vegetative manipulations guided by the FWC's OBVM program, which includes the application of prescribed fire to achieve conditions acceptable to a broad range of wildlife species within the area's fire-adapted natural communities. Some areas may require ecological restoration of ground cover, control of invasive and non-native species, and either thinning or reforestation. Such resource management projects may be necessary to accomplish restoration objectives and to attain the desired future conditions for communities. This is especially important for conservation of habitats and populations of imperiled and locally important species. Landscape ecology is also important, as land use changes in the vicinity of the area, such as intensive residential, commercial, and industrial developments, and the roads that often accompany them, may also affect the attainment of resource conservation goals for the area and the effectiveness of necessary resource management projects.

Timetable for Implementing Management Provisions

Once leased to the FWC for management, a Management Plan will be developed by the FWC within one year, describing the management goals and objectives necessary to implement future resource management programs on the CR. The management plan will also establish the current and future roles of cooperating entities including governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.

Long-range plans would stress ecosystem management and the protection and management of locally important, rare, and imperiled species. Historic analysis of natural communities and vegetation types may be conducted, if deemed necessary, and quantified vegetation management objectives will be developed. The FWC would also assess the condition of wildlife resources and provide planning support to enhance management of locally important species and recovery of imperiled species on the area. Use of prescribed fire and other essential resource management activities will be implemented to maintain and restore natural communities and vegetation types to benefit native wildlife resources.

Programs providing multiple fish and wildlife-based public outdoor recreational uses will be considered for implementation. These potential recreational uses will enhance the public's understanding of the region while providing ample opportunities for outdoor recreational enjoyment. Essential roads will be maintained to provide all weather public access and management operations. Unnecessary roads, fire lanes, and hydrological disturbances will be abandoned or restored as practical. Infrastructure development will be limited to only that

which is necessary to allow public access and to provide for the necessary facilities, security, and management of the property. Cultural sites will be managed in coordination with DHR.

Estimate of Revenue-Generating Potential

Revenue from conservation lands can include sales of various permits and recreational user fees and ecotourism activities if such projects could be economically developed. Area regulations would be developed to identify the necessary and required permits, fees, and regulations. Timber sales from thinning operations or restoration of off-site plantations may also yield additional revenue. Apiary leases will be considered as a revenue source depending on whether the area meets the criteria of the FWC’s Apiary Policy. In addition, the Florida Legislature appropriates funds for land management. The long-term values of ecosystem services to local and regional land and water resources, and to human health, are expected to be significant.

Recommendations as to Other Governmental Agency Involvement

The FWC will continue to cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies including the USFWS, Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Forest Service, the SFWMD, SWFWMD, TNC, and Polk County in management of the property.

Estimate of Costs

The initial non-recurring (first year only) start-up cost for the CR is estimated to be \$206,560, which includes public access, infrastructure, and fixed capital outlays necessary for management of the area. Below is an estimate of the recurring annual operating costs to operate and manage the CR. Optimal management of the area would require one (1) full-time equivalent (FTE) position. Salary requirements for this FTE position and costs to operate and manage the CR are reflected in the cost estimate below. All land management funding is dependent upon annual legislative appropriations.

Management Cost Summary

Resource Management	Expenditure	Priority	Priority schedule:
Non-native/ Invasive Species Control	\$3,189	(1)	(1) Immediate (annual)
Prescribed Burning	\$6,829	(1)	(2) Intermediate (3-4 years)
Cultural Resource Management	\$284	(1)	(3) Other (5+ years)
Timber Management	\$439	(1)	
Hydrological Management	\$2,892	(1)	
Other (Surveys, Monitoring, etc.)	\$35,709	(1)	
Subtotal	\$49,342		
Administration			
General Administration	\$1,072	(1)	
Support			
Land Management Planning	\$1,743	(1)	
Land Management Reviews	\$258	(3)	
Training/Staff Development	\$310	(1)	
Vehicle Purchase	\$7,965	(2)	
Vehicle Operation and Maintenance	\$3,176	(1)	
Other (Reports, Data Management, etc.)	\$2,931	(1)	
Subtotal	\$16,383		
Capital Improvements			
Facility Maintenance	\$7,514	(1)	

Visitor Services/Recreation

Info./Education/Operations	\$4,738	(1)
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Law Enforcement

Resource Protection	\$994	(1)
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Total	\$80,042*	
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* Based on the characteristics and requirements of this area, one (1) full time equivalent (FTE) position would be optimal to fully manage this area. All land management funding is dependent upon annual legislative appropriations.

Appendix E:

Imperiled Species FNAI Ranking Definitions

FNAI Definitions of imperiled species ranks and conservation status

Using a ranking system developed by NatureServe and the Natural Heritage Program Network, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory assigns two ranks for each element. The global rank is based on an element's worldwide status; the state rank is based on the status of the element in Florida. Element ranks are based on many factors, the most important ones being estimated number of Element Occurrences (EOs), estimated abundance (number of individuals for species; area for natural communities), geographic range, estimated number of adequately protected EOs, relative threat of destruction, and ecological fragility.

FNAI GLOBAL ELEMENT RANK

- G1** = Critically imperiled globally because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences or less than 1000 individuals) or because of extreme vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- G2** = Imperiled globally because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences or less than 3000 individuals) or because of vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- G3** = Either very rare and local throughout its range (21-100 occurrences or less than 10,000 individuals) or found locally in a restricted range or vulnerable to extinction from other factors.
- G4** = Apparently secure globally (may be rare in parts of range).
- G5** = Demonstrably secure globally.
- GH** = Of historical occurrence throughout its range, may be rediscovered (e.g., ivory-billed woodpecker).
- GX** = Believed to be extinct throughout range.
- GXC** = Extirpated from the wild but still known from captivity or cultivation.
- G#?** = Tentative rank (e.g., G2?).
- G#G#** = Range of rank; insufficient data to assign specific global rank (e.g., G2G3).
- G#T#** = Rank of a taxonomic subgroup such as a subspecies or variety; the G portion of the rank refers to the entire species and the T portion refers to the specific subgroup; numbers have same definition as above (e.g., G3T1).
- G#Q** = Rank of questionable species - ranked as species but questionable whether it is species or subspecies; numbers have same definition as above (e.g., G2Q).
- G#T#Q** = Same as above, but validity as subspecies or variety is questioned.
- GU** = Unrankable; due to a lack of information no rank or range can be assigned (e.g., GUT2).
- GNA** = Ranking is not applicable because the element is not a suitable target for conservation (e.g. a hybrid species).
- GNR** = Element not yet ranked (temporary).
- GNRTNR** = Neither the element nor the taxonomic subgroup has yet been ranked.

FNAI STATE ELEMENT RANK

- S1** = Critically imperiled in Florida because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences or less than 1000 individuals) or because of extreme vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- S2** = Imperiled in Florida because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences or less than 3000 individuals) or because of vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- S3** = Either very rare and local in Florida (21-100 occurrences or less than 10,000 individuals) or found locally in a restricted range or vulnerable to extinction from other factors.
- S4** = Apparently secure in Florida (may be rare in parts of range).
- S5** = Demonstrably secure in Florida.
- SH** = Of historical occurrence in Florida, possibly extirpated, but may be rediscovered (e.g., ivory-billed woodpecker).
- SX** = Believed to be extirpated throughout Florida.
- SU** = Unrankable; due to a lack of information no rank or range can be assigned.
- SNA** = State ranking is not applicable because the element is not a suitable target for conservation (e.g. a hybrid species).
- SNR** = Element not yet ranked (temporary).

FEDERAL LEGAL STATUS

Legal status information provided by FNAI for information only. For official definitions and lists of protected species, consult the relevant federal agency.

Definitions derived from U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973, Sec. 3. Note that the federal status given by FNAI refers only to Florida

2019-04-19

Page 2

FNAI
Definitions of imperiled species ranks and conservation status

populations and that federal status may differ elsewhere.

- C** = Candidate species for which federal listing agencies have sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support proposing to list the species as Endangered or Threatened.
- E** = Endangered: species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- E, T** = Species currently listed endangered in a portion of its range but only listed as threatened in other areas
- E, PDL** = Species currently listed endangered but has been proposed for delisting.
- E, PT** = Species currently listed endangered but has been proposed for listing as threatened.
- E, XN** = Species currently listed endangered but tracked population is a non-essential experimental population.
- T** = Threatened: species likely to become Endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- PE** = Species proposed for listing as endangered
- PS** = Partial status: some but not all of the species' infraspecific taxa have federal
- PT** = Species proposed for listing as threatened
- SAT** = Treated as threatened due to similarity of appearance to a species which is federally listed such that enforcement personnel have difficulty in attempting to differentiate between the listed and unlisted species.
- SC** = Not currently listed, but considered a "species of concern" to USFWS.

STATE LEGAL STATUS

Provided by FNAI for information only. For official definitions and lists of protected species, consult the relevant state agency.

Animals: Definitions derived from "Florida's Endangered Species and Species of Special Concern, Official Lists" published by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 1 August 1997, and subsequent updates.

- C** = Candidate for listing at the Federal level by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- FE** = Listed as Endangered Species at the Federal level by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- FT** = Listed as Threatened Species at the Federal level by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- FXN** = Federal listed as an experimental population in Florida
- FT(S/A)** = Federal Threatened due to similarity of appearance
- ST** = State population listed as Threatened by the FFWCC. Defined as a species, subspecies, or isolated population which is acutely vulnerable to environmental alteration, declining in number at a rapid rate, or whose range or habitat is decreasing in area at a rapid rate and as a consequence is destined or very likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future.
- SSC** = Listed as Species of Special Concern by the FFWCC. Defined as a population which warrants special protection, recognition, or consideration because it has an inherent significant vulnerability to habitat modification, environmental alteration, human disturbance, or substantial human exploitation which, in the foreseeable future, may result in its becoming a threatened species. (SSC* for *Pandion haliaetus* (Osprey) indicates that this status applies in Monroe county only.)
- N** = Not currently listed, nor currently being considered for listing.

Plants: Definitions derived from Sections 581.011 and 581.185(2), Florida Statutes, and the Preservation of Native Flora of Florida Act, 5B-40.001. FNAI does not track all state-regulated plant species; for a complete list of state-regulated plant species, call Florida Division of Plant Industry, 352-372-3505 or see: <<http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/>>.

- E** = Endangered: species of plants native to Florida that are in imminent danger of extinction within the state, the survival of which is unlikely if the causes of a decline in the number of plants continue; includes all species determined to be endangered or threatened pursuant to the U.S. Endangered Species Act.
- T** = Threatened: species native to the state that are in rapid decline in the number of plants within the state, but which have not so decreased in number as to cause them to be Endangered.
- N** = Not currently listed, nor currently being considered for listing.

Appendix E:

Site Visit Photos



Dome swamp



Shoreline of Lake Hatchineha

April 14, 2023



Improved Pasture



Baygall with invasive sword fern



Mesic flatwoods



Mesic Hammock



Scrub



Possible Sand Skink track



Scrub with planted longleaf pine