

Hendrie Ranch

Less-than-Fee

Florida Forever Project Evaluation Report

Highlands County

prepared by

Division of State Lands Staff

Acquisition and Restoration Council Liaison Staff

and

Florida Natural Areas Inventory

DRAFT for June 12, 2020 ARC meeting



Proposed Land Manager
Acres
Just Value
Application Date
Sponsor

Landowner (DSL monitors)
7,229
\$2,438,653
October 31, 2019
J&J Hendrie and J&D Hendrie LC



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Executive Summary

The Hendrie Ranch less-than-fee proposal is in Highlands County located on both sides of U.S. Hwy 27, 3.5 miles north of the Glades County line. Calculated in GIS, the acreage total is 7,229 (7,242 acres according to the county property cards) and has a just value of \$2.4 million. This proposal was sponsored by Derek Hendrie, manager of Hendrie Ranch.

The addition of Hendrie Ranch would create linkage for 125,000-acre contiguous expanse of conservation lands. It would increase the amount of protected area and connectivity between established conservation lands in the greater landscape. Several of the environmental analyses note that this area has long been viewed as a vital link to regional conservation efforts.

The land would be managed by the landowner and the conservation easement would be periodically monitored by the Division of State Lands.

Hendrie Ranch is bordered by Archbold Biological Station to the northwest, and from there to the 53,000-acre contiguous conservation landscape that includes Archbold, the McJunkin Tract of the state's Lake Wales Ridge (LWR) Wildlife and Environmental Area, the XL Ranch easement, and a series of Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) easements along Fisheating Creek including the Bluehead, Westby and Carlton ranches. The Stokes USDA WRP easement of 1,532 acres lies to the west. The Lott WRP easement for 1,161 acres lies to the northeast. And a nearly four-mile common boundary with lands owned and managed by the Smoak family to the south, a Florida Forever conservation easement of 8,434 acres. There are nearly two miles of common boundary with protected easement property owned by Lykes, combined with the state lands along Fisheating Creek, representing a conservation area of 59,976 acres.

The entire Hendrie Ranch proposal is 100 percent rare species habitat. Almost 90 percent of the proposal lies within a designated FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area. This property provides good quality habitat for Florida panthers and Florida black bears, both documented on site. Panther movement north of the Caloosahatchee would benefit from Hendrie Ranch being placed in perpetual conservation as proposed. The area supports a small population of scrubjays. Burrowing owls and gopher tortoises have been observed on the property. Resource analyses included in this report record many more species of note onsite.

Hendrie Ranch is near the southern terminus of the LWR. Almost 70 percent of the site is still in natural communities. Mesic flatwoods (1,840 acres) are the most prevalent. Baygall covers 1,401 acres. The Hendrie Ranch's almost 1,300 acres of scrub and scrubby flatwoods harbor "a rich complement of rare and endangered plants and animals characteristic of the southern Lake Wales Ridge". On this site, and the Smoak property to the south, are the only remaining intact scrubs on south LWR. Depression marsh communities (276 acres) are spread through Hendrie Ranch. The hydric hammock on the property (153 acres) appears to have a well-developed canopy of cabbage palm, sweetbay, and red bay. There are a few



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dome swamps and also three seepage streams on the property, two emanating from the ridge portion of the property and a third from a contiguous holding pond.

Hendrie Ranch is 30 percent improved pasture, with less than four percent of the proposal improved for roads, woodland pasture, artificial ponds, cattle ponds, and ranching structures. A total of 600 head of beef cattle use the eastern half of the property. Old world climbing fern was seen in many places here, and, smutgrass is problematic in much of the pasture. Feral hogs are present on the property.

A habitat management program that incorporates routine prescribed fire, particularly within the native habitat on Hendrie Ranch, will improve and maintain conditions in native habitat and benefit many imperiled wildlife species. Hendrie Ranch lies within a landscape that is increasingly under pressure from expansion of nearby cities and developments, and protection of intact private lands such as Hendrie Ranch is important to the long-term persistence of wildlife in this region.

If ARC approves this land for inclusion in the 2021 Florida Forever priority list, it is ideal for adding to the boundary of the LWR Florida Forever project. It should be designated essential for the Florida Forever program.



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Purpose for Acquisition

Hendrie Ranch is proposed for the following public purposes:

- (a) Enhance the coordination and completion of land acquisition projects;
- (b) Increase the protection of Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community, and landscape levels;
- (c) Protect, restore, and maintain the quality and natural functions of land, water, and wetland systems of the state;
- (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; and
- (g) Increase the amount of forest land available for sustainable management of natural resources.

Location and Proximity to Other Managed Areas

Hendrie Ranch proposal in Highlands county comprises 7,242 acres (per application) and is calculated using GIS as 7,229 acres. The site is being offered for less-than-fee simple sale to the state. Approximately 22% of the property lies west of U.S. Highway 27. Hendrie Ranch is the best remaining link between a complex of conservation lands that extend generally northwest and south/southeast of the property. Adjacent conservation lands include Fisheating Creek/Smoak Groves Conservation Easement (CE), Fisheating Creek/Lykes Brothers CE, and Archbold Biological Station. Several Wetlands Reserve Program easements also border the property on the west and the eastern boundary. The ranch has long been viewed as a vital piece linking regional conservation efforts.

Resource Description (By FNAI and FWC)

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

A field survey was conducted on February 18, 2020, by FNAI staff Dan Hipes and Katy NeSmith, along with the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) liaison staff. The western half of Hendrie Ranch is within the Carlton Ranch Ridge of the Southwestern Flatwoods District while the eastern half lies within the District's De Soto Slope, sloping from 100 feet in elevation at the ridge's edge to 40 feet on the eastern boundary (Brooks 1981). The proposal is situated near the southern end of the LWR and covers a broad area of scrub and scrubby flatwoods, and improved pasture on the ridge. Continuing east, the topography initially drops dramatically off the ridge through baygall and seepage stream communities and then more gradually through a mosaic of wet/mesic flatwoods and hydric hammock, culminating in a large baygall (over 900 acres) and improved pasture along the eastern boundary. Small depression marshes are scattered throughout the property.

The higher elevations are underlain by thick sandy soils, primarily of the Archbold, Basinger and Satellite soil series. Poorly drained Basinger, St. Johns, and Placid soils and Kaliga, Hicoria and Hontoon muck soils



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are predominate off the ridge in the flatwoods and baygall areas of the site. The northeast portion of the property, currently in improved pasture, is underlain primarily by Basinger fine sand and Immokalee sand and was likely dry prairie historically.

While the ranch is a working cattle ranch with approximately 600 beef cows and 2,175 acres (30%) of improved pasture, approximately 69 percent is in varying degrees of natural condition. Dominant natural communities are mesic/wet flatwoods (25%), baygall (19%) and scrub/scrubby flatwoods (18%). Widely scattered depression marshes and small pockets of hydric hammock and dome swamp make up the remaining area (<7%). Improved pasture is more prevalent on the western ridge portion of the ranch and on the far eastern boundary. Unimproved roads, ranching structures, cattle ponds and artificial ponds, and areas of woodland pasture make up <4% of the non-natural acreage on the ranch. The structures are primarily located on the western half of the property.

Flatwoods on the property are mostly down slope from the ridge although small, more linear, stretches can be found bordering baygall and seepage streams on the ridge. Cutthroatgrass (*Coleataenia abscissa*) is State-listed Endangered and endemic to south-central Florida. On Hendrie Ranch there are several areas of cutthroatgrass-dominated wet flatwoods that appear park-like in that South Florida slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*) forms a canopy over a dense grassy understory with few shrubs or mid-story vegetation. These are generally areas that have been burned frequently. Less frequently burned flatwoods have a scattered subcanopy of loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*), laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) and a tall shrub layer of saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), southern bayberry (*Morella cerifera*), fetterbush (*Lyonia lucida*), gallberry (*Ilex glabra*), and winged sumac (*Rhus copallinum*). Herbaceous cover is generally sparse in less frequently burned areas. Noted epiphytes include common wild-pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*) and spreading airplant (*Tillandsia utriculata*), both of which are State-listed as Endangered. Old World climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*), Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC) Category I, is common. Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolia*), also FLEPPC Category I, is occasional.

The mesic flatwoods visited during the field assessment has an open canopy of South Florida slash pine, including some old flattop trees. The occasional cabbage palm can be found in the subcanopy. The recently burned site has a low, 2-3ft, diverse shrub layer that includes dwarf huckleberry (*Gaylussacia dumosa*), gallberry (*Ilex glabra*), coastalplain staggerbush (*Lyonia fruticosa*), fetterbush, few small sand pine (*Pinus clausa*), saw palmetto, shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*), and hog plum (*Ximenia americana*). The groundcover includes purple bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus* var. *glaucopsis*), broomsedge bluestem (*Andropogon virginicus*), bottlebrush threeawn (*Aristida spiciformes*), wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*), netted pawpaw (*Asimina reticulata*), cutthroatgrass, witchgrass (*Dichanthelium* sp.), tall elephantsfoot (*Elephantopus elatus*), blackroot (*Pterocaulon pycnostachyum*), creeping little bluestem (*Schizachyrium stoloniferum*), whitetop aster (*Sericocarpus tortifolius*), knotroot foxtail (*Setaria parviflora*), sweet



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goldenrod (*Solidago odora*), yellow hatpins (*Syngonanthus flavidulus*), and Adam's needle (*Yucca filamentosa*). Some bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*) is present. Cattle are allowed in the 'lower' eastern half of the property but are kept at low densities at 60/1000 acres according to Derek Hendrie.

Small, linear baygall occurs in association with seepage areas on the ridge and 'spill' over into larger areas down slope and eastward. Hendrie Ranch has a large, over 900-acre baygall in the eastern quarter of the property. The head or northern third is outside the Hendrie boundary to the north and west and has mostly been converted to pasture, severing the connection with the source seepage wetlands coming off the ridge (themselves compromised by citrus). This baygall was not accessible during the field assessment, however aerial photography indicates a very heavy infestation of Old World climbing fern. A dense baygall visited near the ridge was dominated by red bay (*Acer rubrum*), loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*), and sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*); coastalplain willow (*Salix caroliniana*), muscadine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) and Old-World climbing fern were also present.

The scrub and scrubby flatwoods communities (almost 1,300 acres) on Hendrie Ranch harbor a rich complement of rare and endangered plants and animal characteristic of the southern LWR. They range in size from an acre to over 300 acres. The smaller scrub/scrubby flatwoods are mostly islands in a matrix of improved pasture; the large blocks are more contiguous, divided by seepage areas, and form the high ridge edge. These, and those on the Smoak property to the south, are the only remaining intact scrubs on the southern end of the LWR. The scrubs vary in the density of scrub oaks and the amount of sand pine and open sandy patches and generally grade into scrubby flatwoods. Several large areas are dominated by Florida rosemary (*Ceratiola ericoides*), which retain openings long after fire. Several rare plants, endemic to the LWR, are present in the scrub on Hendrie Ranch. These include wedge-leaved button-snakeroot (*Eryngium cuneifolium*; only known from Highlands County), Highlands Scrub hypericum (*Hypericum cumulicola*), paper nailwort (*Paronychia chartacea*), Florida jointweed (*Polygonella basiramia*), and scrub plum (*Prunus geniculata*).

In the oak-dominated scrubby areas sand pine is present to varying degrees as young seedlings to 20-30' trees. The shrub layer includes rusty staggerbush (*Lyonia ferruginea*), coastalplain staggerbush (*Lyonia fruticosa*), Chapman's oak (*Quercus chapmanii*), sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*), scrub oak (*Quercus inopina*), scrub palmetto (*Sabal etonia*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), and hog plum (*Ximenia americana*). Herbaceous and ground cover species include the rare nodding pinweed (*Lechea cernua*), Feay's palafox (*Palafoxia feayi*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), and lichens Evans' reindeer lichen (*Cladonia evansii*) and cup lichen (*Cladonia leporina*). Abundant oak leaf litter is present in dense portions of the infrequently burned scrub.

Scrubby flatwoods on the site have scattered South Florida slash pine, few sand pine, and generally more saw palmetto than scrub. A low to 4-6' shrub layer shares many, although not all, of the same species with



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scrub. These include tarflower (*Bejaria racemosa*), rusty staggerbush, coastalplain staggerbush, fetterbush, Chapman's oak, sand live oak, scrub oak, dwarf live oak (*Quercus minima*), tough bully (*Sideroxylon tenax*), sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*), shiny blueberry, and hog plum. The groundcover includes wiregrass, witchgrass, sensitive briar (*Mimosa quadrivalvis*), and pricklypear (*Opuntia humifusa*). Open sandy patches have Evans' reindeer lichen and cup lichen. Particularly dense areas have little to no herbaceous component and abundant oak leaf litter.

Depression marsh communities are spread throughout the ranch and of those seen include natural marshes dominated by maidencane (*Panicum hemitomon*) in shallower portions and pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*) in deeper portions of the marsh. Marshes that are more impacted by improved pasture and cattle are dominated by soft rush (*Juncus effusus* ssp. *solutus*). The rare, endemic, St. John's-wort, Edison's ascyrum (*Hypericum edisonianum*) is found near the eastern boundary on a ruderal berm adjacent to a drainage ditch and is also suspected to occur in more natural settings on the ranch near baygall and depression marsh communities.

Hydric hammock was only viewed peripherally but appears to have a well-developed canopy of cabbage palm, red bay, and sweetbay. The toothed midorus fern (*Telmatoblechnum serrulatum*) is common in the understory.

Only a few small dome swamps were identified on the ranch. Swamp tupelo (*Nyssa biflora*) seems to be a dominant canopy tree with red maple and sweetbay making up the subcanopy. Shrubby southern bayberry and sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*) was also noted.

Two seepage streams appear to originate on the ridge portion of Hendrie Ranch and a third, at the north boundary, from a dug out holding pond just off site. These clear running seepage areas are bordered mostly by narrow bands of baygall on the ridge. Going east down slope from the ridge the surrounding vegetation spreads out into wider baygalls and flatwoods dominated by cutthroatgrass. Extensive invasion of Old-World climbing fern is present in these drainages.

Improved pasture makes up 30% of the property and consists of pasture grasses. Bahiagrass is used most commonly but the ranch also uses limpgrass (*Hemarthria altissima*), Jiggs grass (a variety of bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*), and pangolagrass (*Digitaria eriantha*). Smutgrass (*Sporobolus indicus*), an invasive bunch grass, is problematic in many if not most of the pastures. Tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*; FLEPPC Category I) is scattered around and one large clump of elephant ear (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*; FLEPPC Category II) was observed. Clumps of South Florida slash pine, live oaks, and saw palmetto, are scattered around large pasture areas. Larger loose clumps that have a pasture grass understory were delineated as woodland pasture.



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Ruderal areas, including ditches and along roadsides are weedier and have additional invasive species including Peruvian primrosewillow (*Ludwigia peruviana*), Natal grass (*Melinis repens*), and Caesar's weed (*Urena lobata*), all FLEPPC Category I species.

The following table lists, in approximate order of estimated areal extent, natural communities and other land cover types within the site's boundaries.

Natural communities and landcover types within Florida Forever proposal

<u>Community or Landcover</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Percent of Proposal</u>
mesic/wet flatwoods	1840	25
Baygall	1401	19
Scrub/scrubby flatwoods	1286	18
Depression marsh	276	4
Hydric hammock	153	2
Dome swamp	10	<1
Improved pasture	2,175	30
Roads	24	<1
Developed (ranching structures)	21	<1
Woodland pasture	21	<1
Artificial ponds and cattle ponds	22	<1
Total	7,229	100

Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

Hendrie Ranch is a working cattle ranch with a herd of approximately 600 beef cows. Approximately 2,164 acres (30%) is improved pasture, with the remainder primarily in native conditions. Mesic and wet flatwoods (1,919 acres) and baygall (1,320 acres) comprise approximately 17% and 18% of the landcover, respectively. Scrub and scrubby flatwoods (1,276 acres) accounts for 15% of the landcover. Depression marsh (270 acres) and hydric hammock (153 acres) comprise 4% and 2%, respectively, with wet prairie, dome swamp, roads, structures, woodland pasture, and artificial ponds comprising less than 1% each. The western portion (west of U.S. Highway 27) of Hendrie Ranch is primarily pasture, with scrub and scrubby flatwoods in the northeastern portion, and pockets of scrub, depression marsh, and flatwoods scattered through the pasture. The eastern portion has a unique landscape, starting with a small pasture area that moves uphill into a large complex of scrub and scrubby flatwoods. These communities have a clear eastern border, which is also the eastern edge of the Lake Wales Ridge. The highest point in the scrub is 150 feet above mean sea level. Moving east, the landscape changes to pockets of baygall and flatwoods, with cutthroat grass (*Panicum abscissum*) seeps on the downslope portion. The eastern edge of the property is pasture, with an elevation of 40 feet above sea level.

Prescribed fire has been a management tool on Hendrie Ranch, primarily in pastures and mesic/wet flatwoods. Scrub and scrubby flatwoods have not been managed with prescribed fire and are in a mix of



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conditions as a result. Occasional wildfires have burned in scrub on Hendrie Ranch, and the area continues to support a small population of Florida scrub-jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*).

Timber harvest has been used occasionally as a management tool in flatwoods on Hendrie Ranch, and those communities are in good condition. Pastures on Hendrie Ranch are relatively open, with snags and trees to provide perching and roosting habitat for wildlife. Exotic invasive plant species do not appear to be a widespread issue on Hendrie Ranch, aside from the non-native pasture grasses. Tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum* Dunal) was observed within the pastures. However, the area has an extensive climbing fern infestation in many of the ditches, baygall, and other wet communities. Currently, treatment is ongoing for this infestation, but the landowner expressed interest in working with the local Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area to pursue treatment. Overall, native communities on Hendrie Ranch will continue to benefit from the regular application of prescribed fire. The scrub and scrubby flatwoods would benefit from increased prescribed fire to improve and retain conditions suitable for Florida scrub-jays.

The cattle program on Hendrie Ranch consists of approximately 600 cows in a cow/calf operation, which have access to both native and non-native areas. The property has several cattle pens and other infrastructure for cows, as well as man-made cattle ponds.

Wildlife species observed during the tour included gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), eastern meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), and many other species. Feral hog (*Sus scrofa*) sign was observed. The landowner also reports that Florida scrub-jays are present and that Florida burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*) have been observed on the property. Additionally, trail cameras have detected Florida panthers (*Puma concolor coryi*) and Florida black bears (*Ursus americanus floridanus*).

During the field tour, listed wildlife species observed included gopher tortoises. The gopher tortoises were observed around the perimeter of the scrub on the larger eastern portion of Hendrie Ranch. It is likely gopher tortoises occur in other areas besides the scrub, including the pastures. The landowner stated that the area gets very wet during the rainy season, so the higher elevation scrub provides suitable habitat for gopher tortoises even during the rainy season. The pastures on Hendrie Ranch are suitable for use by other listed wildlife such as the Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*), northern crested caracara (*Caracara cheriway*), 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. The FNAI Element Occurrence database lists several occurrences of rare plants and animals on Hendrie Ranch that were not observed during the field tour including the Florida scrub lizard (*Sceloporus woodi*), sand skink (*Plestiodon reynoldsi*), as well as 13 listed rare plants.

The Hendrie Ranch 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 on the Lake Wales Ridge. Its proximity to



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existing conservation lands and those protected under easement provides a vital link connecting protected lands in the Fisheating Creek region to the south and north and northwest to the Lake Wales Ridge. Bear researchers with the University of Kentucky, Archbold Biological Station, and the FWC have conducted several studies of the Highlands-Glades bear subpopulation and identified extensive bear denning on Hendrie Ranch and surrounding areas. Florida panthers are known to occur in this area, and with their recent move north of the Caloosahatchee River, protection of the Hendrie Ranch in the long-term would be very beneficial to these wide-ranging imperiled species.

The FWC GIS analysis of the Cooperative Land Cover v3.3 indicates that Hendrie Ranch is a mix of many different community types including improved pasture (30%), scrub and scrubby flatwoods (18%), mesic flatwoods (17%), baygall (4%), and freshwater marsh and swamp (3%). Approximately 33% of the proposal is classified as wetland based on the National Wetlands Inventory.

The FWC Florida Landscape Assessment Model (FLAM) is a GIS model that determines the landscape value based on natural resources and fish and wildlife habitat. The FLAM ranks habitat from 0 to 10; a rank of 10 being of greatest value. The mean FLAM score for this property is 8.7. All the project is identified as Priority 1 or 2 (of 5) for the Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project. Approximately 33% of the proposal is classified as wetland based on the National Wetlands Inventory.

Approximately 89% of Hendrie Ranch lies within a designated FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area (SHCA) for species including the Florida scrub-jay, Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), swallow-tailed kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), sand skink, Florida black bear and Florida burrowing owl. The FWC GIS Environmental Resources Analysis containing more detailed information has been provided under separate cover.

Goals, Measures and Criteria

The primary source for resource-related acreages is the Florida Forever Measures Evaluation (FFME) table prepared by FNAI. For additional relevant information, sources used will be specifically identified.

Goal A:

Enhance the coordination and completion of land acquisition projects

Measure A2:

The number of acres protected through the use of alternatives to fee simple acquisition.

If acquired 7,229 acres (GIS) will be protected through less-than-fee acquisition.



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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.

Approximately 6,438 acres (89%) of the project will contribute to significant Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas, as noted in the FFME table prepared by FNAI. (See appendix for more detail.)

Measure B2:

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

An analysis of priority conservation areas based on Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment data may be found in the Florida Forever Measures table. Habitat conservation priorities for 281 of Florida's rarest species were mapped and divided into six priority classes. The Florida Forever Measures table shows the acres for each priority class found on the Hendrie Ranch proposal. Overall, the site contains approximately 7,229 acres (100% of site) of rare species habitat. The habitat is mostly Priority 2 (52% of site) with substantial areas in Priority 1 (18%), Priority 3 (14%) and Priority 4 (13%) and the remainder split between Priority 5 (2%) and Priority 6 (<1%).

The following table 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 of habitat for all species is more than the total acreage of the priority conservation areas.



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Rare species habitat based on FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities for 281 species with the greatest conservation need

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Chionanthus pygmaeus	Pygmy fringe tree	G2G3	807
Cladonia perforata	Perforate reindeer lichen	G1	803
Eryngium cuneifolium	Wedge-leaved button-snakeroot	G1	738
Hypericum cumulicola	Highlands scrub hypericum	G2	1146
Liatris ohlingerae	Florida blazing star	G2	880
Nolina brittoniana	Britton's beargrass	G3	887
Paronychia chartacea ssp. chartacea	Paper-like nailwort	G3T3	1064
Polygonella basiramia	Florida jointweed	G3	1129
Prunus geniculata	Scrub plum	G3	912
Schizachyrium niveum	Scrub bluestem	G1G2	41
Drymarchon couperi	Eastern indigo snake	G3	5609
Plestiodon egregius lividus	Blue-tailed mole skink	G5T2	975
Plestiodon reynoldsi	Sand skink	G2	1095
Aphelocoma coerulescens	Florida scrub-jay	G2	2283
Caracara cheriway	Crested caracara	G5	4998
Mycteria americana	Wood stork	G4	289
Picoides borealis	Red-cockaded woodpecker	G3	238
Puma concolor coryi	Florida panther	G5T1	5469
Ursus americanus floridanus	Florida black bear	G5T2	7227

Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory

Measure B3:

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

Approximately 7,229 acres (100%) of the project will contribute to landscape linkages, conservation corridors, and giving priority to completing linkages, as noted in the FFME table prepared by FNAI. (See appendix for more detail.)

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 Florida Forever Measures table lists the acreages of under-represented natural communities found on the site. Based on this analysis, the Hendrie Ranch proposal contains 1,840 acres of mesic/wet flatwoods (25% of site) and 1,286 acres of scrub and scrubby flatwoods (18% 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.



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The Hendrie Ranch proposal contributes to a large, contiguous landscape-sized protection area of more than 140,000 acres, which includes Fisheating Creek/Smoak Groves Conservation Easement, Fisheating Creek/Lykes Brothers Conservation Easement, Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area, Archbold Biological Station, several NRCS WRP Easements, LWR Wildlife and Environmental Area and several other protected lands.

Measure B6:

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

The FNAI database includes multiple records of many rare species of animals and plants on site because of Hendrie Ranch's long history of allowing scientists to carry out surveys on their property. The data is principally the result of field surveys by Ann Johnson (FNAI) and Steve Christman (for FWC) in the 1980s and later surveys mostly from the University of South Florida (for FWC) and Archbold Biological Station. Taxa documented that are endemic to the LWR alone number seven plants and one lizard (* in following table). Hendrie Ranch is also extremely important for the wide-ranging species, Florida black bear and the Florida panther, based on ongoing research by the FWC.

The Florida Forever Measures table 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 lack sufficient data to justify addition to the FNAI database at this time. The following table contains species falling into any of these observational categories, as well as species gleaned from other sources (e.g., Florida Breeding Bird Atlas) with different degrees of locational precision.



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Rare plants and animals documented or reported to occur within the Florida Forever proposal conservation need

<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Global Rank</u>	<u>State Rank</u>	<u>Federal Status</u>	<u>State Status</u>
<u>Rare plants documented on site</u>					
Calamintha ashei	Ashe's savory	G3	S3	N	T
Chionanthus pygmaeus	pygmy fringe tree	G2G3	S2S3	E	E
Cladonia perforata	perforate reindeer lichen	G1	S1	E	E
Eryngium cuneifolium*	wedge-leaved button-snakeroot	G1	S1	E	E
Euphorbia rosescens*	scrub spurge	G1	S1	N	E
Hypericum cumulicola*	Highlands Scrub hypericum	G2	S2	E	E
Lechea cernua	nodding pinweed	G3	S3	N	T
Lechea divaricate	pine pinweed	G2	S2	N	E
Liatis ohlingerae*	Florida blazing star	G2	S2	E	E
Nolina brittoniana	Britton's beargrass	G3	S3	E	E
Paronychia chartacea	paper-like nailwort	G3T3	S3	T	E
var. chartacea*					
Polygonella basiramia*	Florida jointweed	G3	S3	T	E
Prunus geniculata*	scrub plum	G3	S3	E	E
<u>Rare animals documented on site</u>					
Lithobates capito	gopher frog	G3	S3	N	N
Crotalus adamanteus	eastern diamondback rattlesnake	G4	S3	N	N

Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

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 property is offered for less-than-fee acquisition, intended to be utilized in a manner consistent with existing uses. Invasive exotic plant control needs of the property appear manageable. Targeting cogongrass, Brazilian pepper, and tropical soda apple while they are still at a relatively low level would be beneficial. A baseline assessment to determine the full extent of invasive plant species is warranted if acquisition of the easement occurs.

Measure C4:

The number of acres acquired that protect natural floodplain functions.

Approximately 2,770 acres (38%) provides for the protection of natural floodplain functions, as noted in the FFME table prepared by FNAI. (See appendix for more detail.)



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Measure C5:

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

Approximately 7,210 acres (100%) provides for the protection of surface waters of the state, as noted in the FFME table prepared by FNAI. (See appendix for more detail.)

Measure C8:

The number of acres of functional wetland systems protected.

Approximately 2,224 acres (31%) provides for the protection of functional wetlands, as noted in the FFME table prepared by FNAI (See appendix for more detail.)

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 D3:

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

Approximately 7,229 acres (100%) provides for the protection of groundwater recharge areas, as noted on the FFME table prepared by FNAI. (See appendix for more detail.)

Property is roughly 7,240 acres, north west of Lake Okeechobee and just south of Lake Placid. This property is in the Lake Okeechobee BMAP. The property would provide water protection and ground water protection for the region.

Hendrie Ranch is in Northern Everglades BMAPs, and while based on the scoring may not be considered high priority, these areas are of particular interest and focus for restoration efforts.

FINAL DEAR SCORE = 2 (Medium Low 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.

This is a less-than-fee proposal, so public use is not expected. However, Hendrie Ranch has an agreement with Archbold Biological Station to allow scientists to conduct research on the scrub habitat. The property is extremely important to regional biodiversity both for common species and for many imperiled and rare plants and animals. Acquisition of this property would link five large discrete conservation lands and would assemble an approximate 125,000-acre continuous expanse of conservation lands within a vital wildlife corridor.



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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.

There are no archaeological sites known or recorded on the property. There is one unrecorded historic structure; however, it is unclear whether the owners plan on preserving the integrity of the structure or having it recorded. Were the structure to be recorded then it would meet Measure F1 for increasing the number and percentage of historic properties listed in the Florida Master Site File.

Measure F2:

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

The project does not meet measure two because it is a less-than fee project.

Cultural Resources:

This tract holds no sites currently listed in the Florida Master Site File. The applicant stated that he is not aware of any archaeological sites on the property. The property has not been professionally surveyed for archaeological and historical sites. The site file shows 17 historic structures, 34 archaeological sites, and 3 resource groups as being located within a five-mile radius of this property. The tract's location, topography, and proximity to freshwater suggests low – medium probability of holding any potentially significant archaeological or historical sites.

Field Observations:

No substantial ground disturbance was observed during field review of the property. There is an unrecorded historic cabin on the property that was present when the property was acquired by the Dupuis family. The cabin was reported to have been used as temporary lodging by cowboys while working in the area.

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 294 acres (4%) are available for sustainable forest management, as noted in the FFME table prepared by FNAI. (See appendix for more detail.)



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Criteria

Section 259.105(9), Florida Statutes

- (a) The project meets multiple goals described in subsection (4).
- (b) The project is part of an ongoing governmental effort to restore, protect, or develop land areas or water resources.
- (c) The project enhances or facilitates management of properties already under public ownership.
- (f) The project contributes to the solution of water resource problems on a regional basis.
- (l) The project is a joint acquisition, either among public agencies, nonprofit organizations, or private entities, or by a public-private partnership.

Management

If acquired as a perpetual conservation easement, primary management responsibility would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management to confirm continued compliance with the conditions of the easement would be coordinated by the Florida DEP, Division of State Lands, Office of Environmental Services. Transfer of ownership would not affect the conditions of the perpetual easements and rights acquired. Each time the land would transfer to another ownership, the perpetual easement and its conditions run with the title. The Board of Trustees is granted the opportunity to exercise its right of first refusal (to acquire the land in fee simple) each time the land under the acquired perpetual conservation easement is transferred from one landowner to another.

Funding Sources

Florida Forever Program Funds

Funding for Mapping, Appraisal, Negotiations and Closing

Florida Forever Program Funds

Ownership Pattern and Acquisition Planning

DEP Bureau of Surveying and Mapping (BSM) notes the ownership information is based on the Property Appraiser's website and the Florida Forever Application. Hendrie Ranch is currently owned by J&J Hendrie and J&D Hendrie LC. It is a combination of seventeen parcels encompassing 7,240.36 acres located in Highlands County.

Title and Legal Access Issues

Title issues that may be significant in the negotiation process would be determined during the preparation of the appraisal map and title information review. Access to the property is via US Highway 27, an improved public road.



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Jurisdictional and Sovereignty Lands Issues

There do not appear to be any sovereignty lands associated with this project. The property appears to be pasture, scrub and wetlands. There are jurisdictional wetlands located on the property. The limits and area of the jurisdictional wetlands and uplands would be determined during the appraisal mapping.

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

The potential easements and encumbrances are currently unknown. Easements and encumbrances of record associated with the project would be identified in the title information and reported in the appraisal map accordingly.

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

There are no apparent contamination sites within the project based on the application and research of the property appraiser's website information. There is an automobile salvage yard located adjacent to the NE part of the property West of US 27 and the West boundary is adjacent to a railroad corridor.

Legal Issues

BSM noted no legal issues at this time.

Acquisition Phases

The proposal is for acquisition of the easement in a single transaction.

Government Planning and Development

Contribution to Recreation and Open Space Needs

None. No public access is proposed. This project is proposed in the less-than-fee category for the purchase of a conservation easement which would not provide public access or public recreational use.

Potential for Losing Significant Natural Attributes or Recreational Open Spaces

The subject property contains an abundance of natural resource features (e.g., at least 2,200 acres of wetland habitat) that provide habitat for an array of rare plants and animals. The property provides significant watershed and water quality protection. Because the potential for urban development is low to moderate in this area, there is low to moderate potential for losing the natural attributes located on the subject property.

The proposal has a moderate to high potential for contributing to recreation and open space needs. The proposal is for less-than-fee simple acquisition, and thus, the opportunity for public access recreation would depend on the terms of the acquisition. The property could function as a wildlife corridor located between surrounding conservation areas. Potential recreational activities could include bicycling, camping, dog walking, environmental education and interpretation, fishing, hiking/jogging, horseback riding, wildlife observation and photography. These recreational uses would likely be compatible with the future land use designation of Agriculture.



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Potential for Being Subdivided

There are two platted subdivisions on the subject. Both were platted in the 1920s. Moving forward, a developer would need to build the required infrastructure. That the approvals were in place, and to this day, this area has not been developed, suggests a low demand for additional housing in this area.

Venus Farms is a flag-shaped area with frontage along Highway 27. Per plat, there are 43 lots with sizes ranging from 4.11 to 4.56 acres. This area is under two parcel ID numbers (C-09-39-30-020-0010-0000 consisting of 220 +/- acres and C-09-39-30-020-0130-0000 with 7.49 acres. The northern boundary of the subdivision is on the south side of Harrell Road, the eastern boundary fronts Pollard Place, both are unpaved roads.

Zoning and Densities within the Project Boundaries

All of the subject property is within the Agriculture (AU) zoning category. This district applies to areas that are presently and primarily agricultural. Permitted structures and uses include but are not limited to: one-family dwellings, community residence homes (with no more than six residents), church and accessory residence, golf course, country club, grove, gardens: truck, botanical, hydroponic, wayside stands of AG products, farms (produce, horticultural, sod, floriculture, dairy, fish), nursery, crop raising, greenhouse, slat house, forestry, beekeeping, farms, cattle or stock raising and grazing, raising and keeping of <9 collectively, of sheep, goats, and hogs (<3 hogs), dock, noncommercial boat pier, slip or boathouse for docking private watercraft, railroad right-of-way and tracks, team tracks, farm labor housing, mobile home on lot, public parks/recreation, public and private schools, and central potable water facilities (less than 100,000 gpd). Additional specifications may apply.

The minimum lot size requirement is five acres, minimum width is 100 feet, and legal access is required. Wetland areas include a density of one dwelling unit for every ten acres.

Based on current zoning, the subject's estimated maximum potential single-family residential density is 1,211 units.

Estimated Cost of Appraisal Mapping

The project contains 7,200 acres +/- based on the parcel information included with the application and FNAI Evaluation. The property lies within parts of 13 land sections.

Estimated costs for appraisal mapping of project could be \$8,000.00. If there were boundary surveys available or other survey information available this cost would be reduced significantly, or the appraisal mapping could be prepared in-house by BSM.

Existing Land Uses and Future Land Use Designations

The future land use is Agriculture. Rural areas in Highlands County are predominantly Agriculture. Uses include rural settlements, active agriculture including biofuel feedstock and other resource-based activities, and recreation and open space.



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Development Potential

The housing needs in Highlands County are for multifamily rental housing that is affordable for the workforce. Given the zoning, location, and rural characteristics of the subject, it is not a prime location for the immediate needs of the County.

Existing Land Uses and Future Land Use Designations

Each of the 17 parcels that comprise the subject has an existing land use code of 63-grazing soil cap 4. Per NRCS Soils Classification, these soils have very severe limitations that restrict the choice of plants or require very careful management, or both. The appearance of lands on the subject is pasture, wetlands, brush, and sandy areas.

Transportation Issues

US Highway 27 is a major arterial four-lane roadway that runs north-south from Georgia to Miami. In Highlands County, it connects Avon Park, Sebring, and Lake Placid to Polk and Glades Counties. The subject has frontage along both sides of this highway.

State Road 70 intersects with US Highway 27 seven miles north of the subject. SR 70 is the east/west route connecting the east coast at Ft. Pierce to the west coast at Bradenton. The traffic count for US Highway 27 near the subject is 8,532. SR 70 to the north has a traffic count of 3,700 AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic). There are no anticipated transportation changes.

Ongoing Governmental Efforts

Several of the analyses for this proposal note that this area has long been viewed as a vital piece linking regional conservation efforts. To assist in the mission of providing for better water supply, aquifer recharge, stormwater management, and other challenges in fresh and saltwater bodies in this area of the state, many strategic properties have been acquired in recent years by various governmental agencies through local, regional, state, and federal land acquisition programs. Connecting corridors for wildlife using conservation easements and conservation lands is a mission codified in Florida statute, and accomplished in concert with other missions to provide for Florida's quality of life, protecting lands, waters, and wildlife for future generations.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Consensus among the FNAI, ARC Liaison staff, and the staff of the Division of State Lands (DSL) determined the final project recommendations. Paula L. Allen and Zachariah Barton, Office of Environmental Services, were responsible for the overall coordination of this report, with participation and contributions from the following:

Archaeological and Historical: Division of Historical Resources, Josh Goodwin

Forestry: Florida Forest Service, Cat Ingram and Vitor Aguilar

Government Planning: Department of Economic Opportunity, Dan Evans

Government Planning: DEP Bureau of Survey and Mapping, Steve Kellogg

Government Planning: DEP Bureau of Appraisal, Frances Alford

Government Planning: DEP Division of Recreation and Parks, Justin Baldwin and Diane Martin

Government Planning: DEP Office of Greenways and Trails, Samantha Browne

Biodiversity: Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Beth Morford

Biodiversity: Florida Natural Areas Inventory, Dan Hipes, Katy Nesmith, and Nathan Pasco

Water Resources: DEP Division of Evaluation, Assessment and Restoration, Kevin Koyne

Transportation: Florida Department of Transportation, Jennifer Carver



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Appendix A:

Hendrie Ranch: Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20200305

GIS ACRES = 7,229

MEASURES	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	1	< 1%
Priority 2	6,404	89%
Priority 3	33	< 1%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Total Acres	6,438	89%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	1,324	18%
Priority 2	3,740	52%
Priority 3	1,033	14%
Priority 4	940	13%
Priority 5	147	2%
Priority 6	44	< 1%
Total Acres	7,228	100%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	7,182	99%
Priority 2	39	< 1%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	7	< 1%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	7,228	100%
B4: Under-represented Natural Communities		
Upland Glade (G1)	0	0%
Pine Rockland (G1)	0	0%
Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2)	1,286	18%
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)	1,840	25%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	0	0%
Total Acres	3,126	43%
B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species		
G1	12	
G2	21	
G3	25	
G4	2	
G5	1	
Total	61	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	1,210	17%
Priority 2	866	12%
Priority 3	358	5%
Priority 4	208	3%
Priority 5	120	2%
Priority 6	8	< 1%
Total Acres	2,770	38%

MEASURES (continued)	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
C5: Surface Water Protection		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	2,612	36%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	4,598	64%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Priority 7	0	0%
Total Acres	7,210	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	1,068	15%
Priority 2	749	10%
Priority 3	278	4%
Priority 4	86	1%
Priority 5	64	< 1%
Priority 6	0	< 1%
Total Acres	2,244	31%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	545	8%
Priority 3	2,013	28%
Priority 4	3,548	49%
Priority 5	1,122	16%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	7,228	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	5.6	
Total Miles	5.6	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number) 0 sites		
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	591	8%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands	1,506	21%
Total Acres	2,097	29%
G3: Forestland for Recharge 294 4%		

^aAcres of each resource in the project and percentage of project represented by each resource are listed except where noted. Acres and percentages are based on rasters of the resources and are rounded.

Table 1 Florida Forever Measures Evaluation

Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

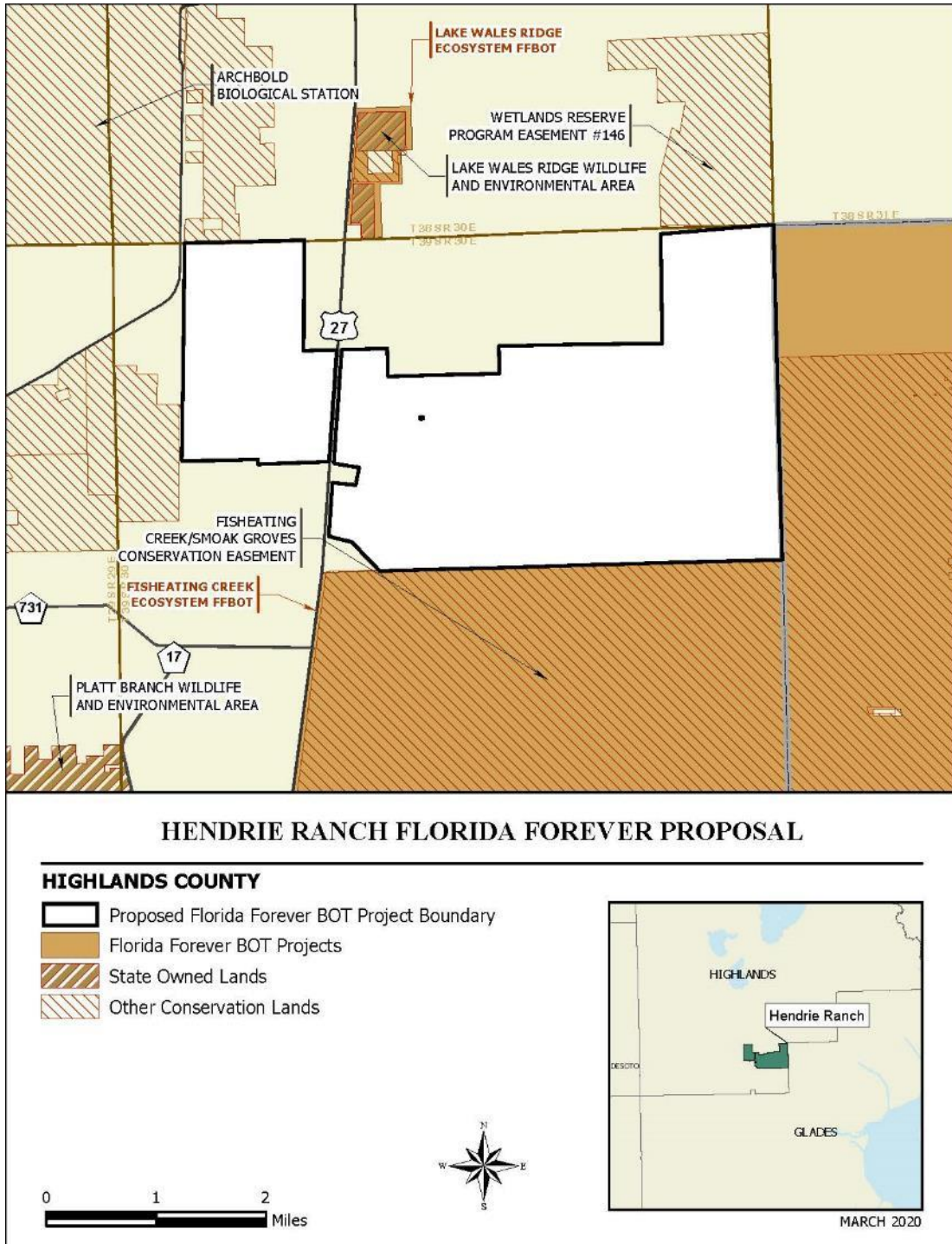


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Appendix B:

Florida Forever proposal boundary maps: Florida Natural Areas Inventory

B1:



Map 1 Proposal Boundaries

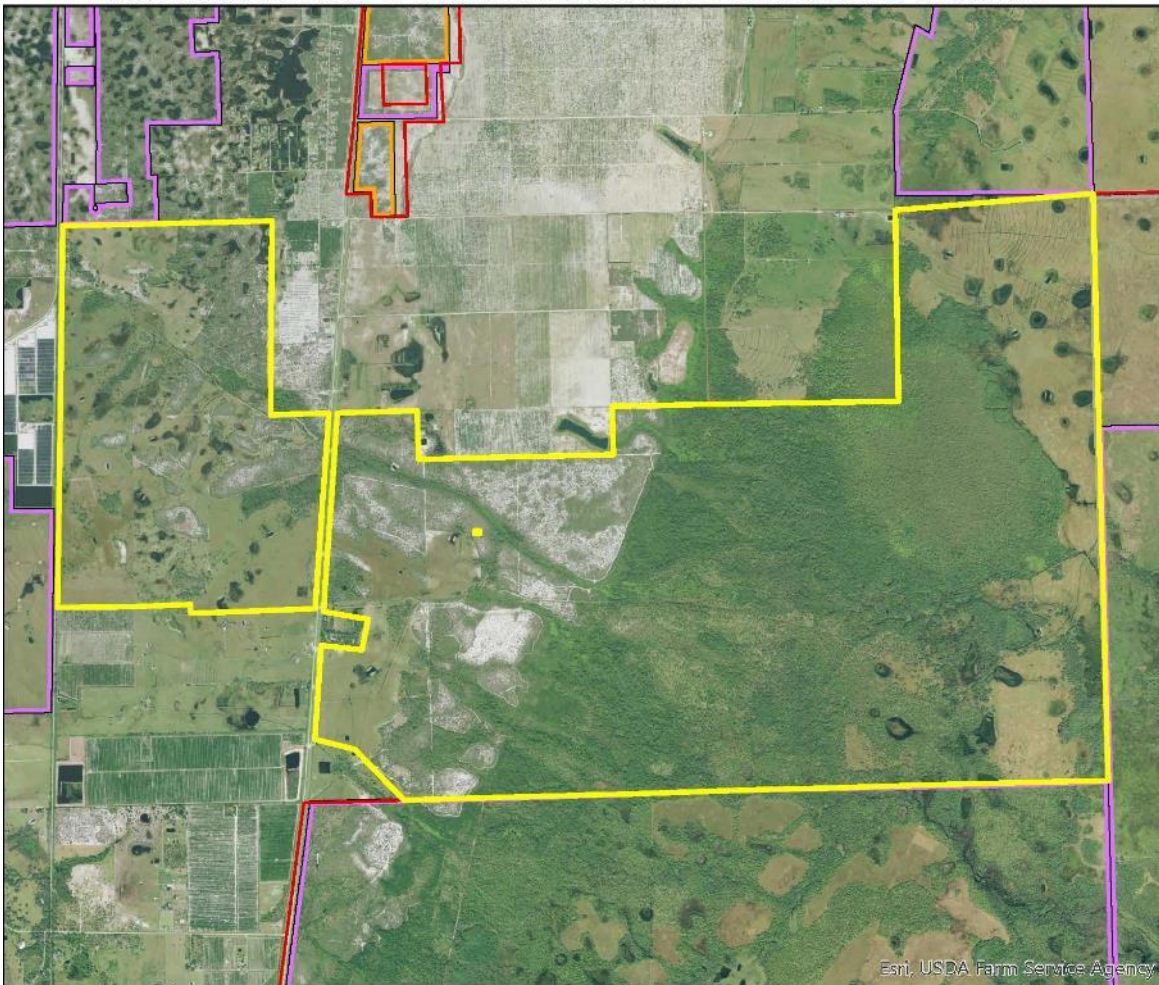


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B2:

Hendrie Ranch Florida Forever Proposal

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED BOUNDARY AS OF MARCH 2020



Esri, USDA Farm Service Agency

Map Produced by: N. Pasco, March 2020

Background: 2017 NAIP Imagery Resolution = 1.0 meter



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Map 2 Aerial map



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Appendix C:

Property ID Numbers for Final Recommended Boundary

County	Parcel ID	Owner	Acres	Assessed Value	Just (Market) Value
Highlands	C013930A0000100000	J&J Hendrie LC	667.6	\$168,793	\$388,224
Highlands	C013930A0000100000	J&D Hendrie LC	483.2	\$75,756	\$286,806
Highlands	C063930A0000300000	J&D Hendrie LC	222.0	\$64,612	\$380,490
Highlands	C073930A0000200000	J&D Hendrie LC	233.0	\$60,764	\$139,756
Highlands	C083930A0000100000	J&D Hendrie LC	634.1	\$139,316	\$320,428
Highlands	C083930A0000200000	J&J Hendrie LC	0.6	\$67	\$154
Highlands	C09393001000100000	J&J Hendrie LC	20.0	\$1,269	\$2,920
Highlands	C09393001000700090	J&J Hendrie LC	0.8	\$31	\$72
Highlands	C09393002000100000	J&J Hendrie LC	220.4	\$20,919	\$48,114
Highlands	C09393002001300000	J&J Hendrie LC	8.0	\$632	\$1,454
Highlands	C093930A0000100000	J&J Hendrie LC	92.2	\$8,420	\$19,366
Highlands	C093930A0000300000	J&J Hendrie LC	10.2	\$432	\$994
Highlands	C093930A0000600000	J&J Hendrie LC	205.2	\$28,279	\$65,042
Highlands	C103930A0000400000	J&J Hendrie LC	529.0	\$36,072	\$82,966
Highlands	C103930A0000500000	J&J Hendrie LC	41.0	\$1,884	\$4,334
Highlands	C113930A0000100000	J&J Hendrie LC	3,858.0	\$485,806	\$1,166,257
Highlands	C173930A0000500000	J&J Hendrie LC	178.0	\$5,623	\$12,934
		Total	7,240.3	\$1,098,675	\$2,920,311

Source: Application