

ITEM 18:

Vote on whether to amend the Hardee Flatwoods Florida Forever Project Boundary to add one parcel totaling approximately 160 acres in Hardee County with a tax assessed market value of approximately \$510,400.

LOCATION:

Hardee County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Blackman Easement amendment proposed by the Crop Disaster Recovery, LLC., adds one parcel in Hardee County totaling approximately 160 acres to the Hardee Flatwoods Florida Forever project. The property owned by Gary and Regina Blackman has a tax assessed value of approximately \$510,400.

The parcel is adjacent to Highlands Hammock State Park (HHSP) and is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition. The landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. If acquired, the landowners will continue to manage the property for cattle grazing and hay farm. The property contains approximately 60 acres of wetlands hydrologically connected to the HHSP. Runoff from the neighboring citrus groves and hay farm to the west is conveyed through the wetlands into the park. The property also contains infrastructure (underground utilities, powerlines and roads) for a planned “Ranchette” development. If acquired the property would provide additional protection to the adjacent conservation area from encroaching development, protect water quality and maintain habitat for native wildlife including the Florida panther and black bear.

The proposal meets the criteria to be submitted as a boundary amendment. The parcels total less than 1,000 acres, have a tax assessed value of less than \$2 million, and are less than 10% of the size of the overall project to which it is being added.

Project History:

The Hardee Flatwoods project is in Hardee County and was added to the Florida Forever Project List in 2017. The purpose of this project is to utilize less than fee acquisition to promote a variety of conservation benefits to the state including the protection of Florida's biodiversity, protection and maintenance of the quality and natural functions of land, water, and wetland systems; maintenance of sufficient quantities of water to meet the current and future needs of natural systems and the citizens of the state; and increasing the amount of forest land available for sustainable management of natural resources.

The Hardee Flatwoods project includes over 1,676 acres with 1,676 acres remaining and is ranked number 23 in the Less than Fee Projects category on the 2020 Florida Forever Priority List. The tax assessed value for the remaining acres to be acquired in this project per property appraiser information (2018) is \$4,401,879.

FNAI Review:

According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 100% of the site contributes to Surface Water Protection, and Aquifer Recharge with additional contributions to Ecological Greenways and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

| Project | DHR | FFS | Lynetta Griner | FWC | Bill Palmer | Elva Peppers | DEP | Selected |
|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Hardee Flatwoods: Blackman Easement | | | | | | | | |



To: Deborah Burr, DEP/OES
 From: Dale R. Jackson, FNAI
 Date: November 23, 2020
 Subject: Proposed Boundary Modification to Florida Forever BOT Project:
Hardee Flatwoods – Blackman Property, Hardee County

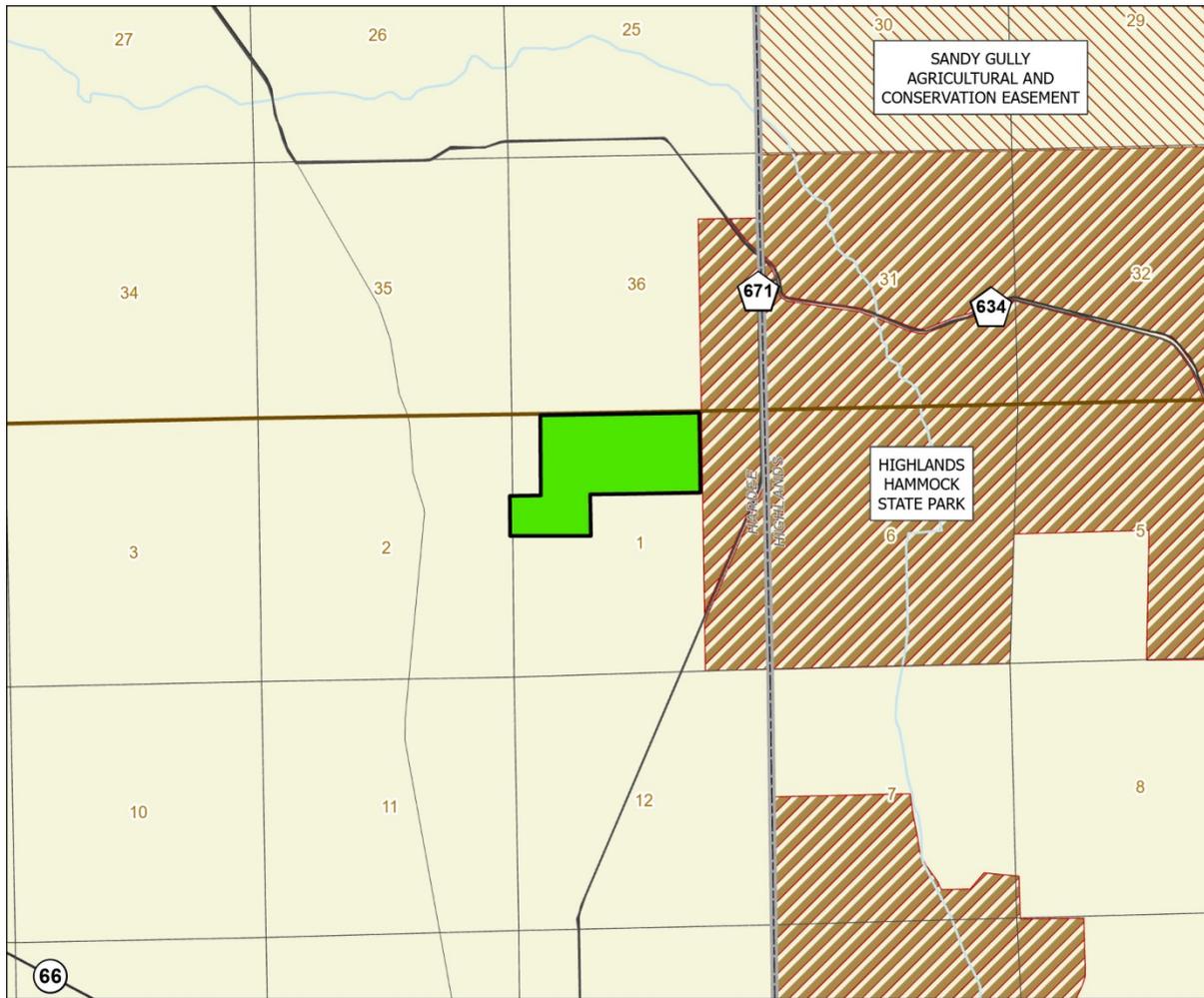
The Hardee Flatwoods FFBOT project is designed to enhance completion of regional land acquisition projects, increase protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, ensure water quality and quantity, and increase sustainable forest lands.

The proposed Blackman Property addition includes 160 acres in eastern Hardee County just west of the Highlands County line. The tract is contiguous with the western border of Highlands Hammock State Park (shared boundary of ca. 1,667 feet = 0.32 mile) and is 5 miles due south of the existing Hardee Flatwoods project. The nearest FFBOT tract is the Miller Tract of the Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem project, ca. 3.5 miles to the east-southeast. The owners propose the property (all or part) for less-than-fee acquisition.

The site lies in a predominantly agricultural landscape west of the Lake Wales Ridge. The northeastern portion of the site, roughly 30%, is chiefly a large basin/depression wetland that overlaps into the state park. Uplands comprising the remainder of the site have been mostly converted to agriculture (hay farm and cattle pasture), although the southern portion supports approximately three acres of successional hardwood forest/mesic hammock on the edge of a shrubby marsh. Presumably, mesic/wet flatwoods once covered most of the uplands. Alterations include drainage/irrigation canals, fencing, and some underground utilities, power lines, and telephone boxes to support potential homesites.

The FNAI database contains no specific records of rare species on site. The Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*, G5T4/S4, N, N) is considered common regionally by the FWC and occasionally uses or traverses the site according to the application (which also reports occasional passage by the Florida panther). Many rare plants and animals are known from lands near the site, especially Highlands Hammock State Park, but given disturbance to the site's uplands, field surveys are needed to determine if any of these occur within the proposal. Wetlands on site are almost certainly used for foraging by a variety of wading birds.

The Florida Forever Measures Evaluation (FFME) at the end of this memo is based on the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment developed by FNAI. The data used in that analysis represent a standardized, statewide perspective of natural community distributions based primarily on data from the Cooperative Land Cover Map. Most to all of the proposed addition contributes to Surface Water Protection, Aquifer Recharge, and Ecological Greenways, with additional substantial contributions to Functional Wetlands and Natural Floodplain Function.



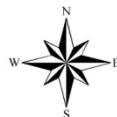
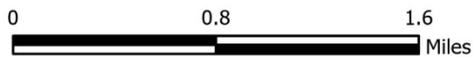
HARDEE FLATWOODS PROPOSED ADDITION

HARDEE COUNTY

-  Proposed Florida Forever BOT Project Addition
-  State Owned Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands

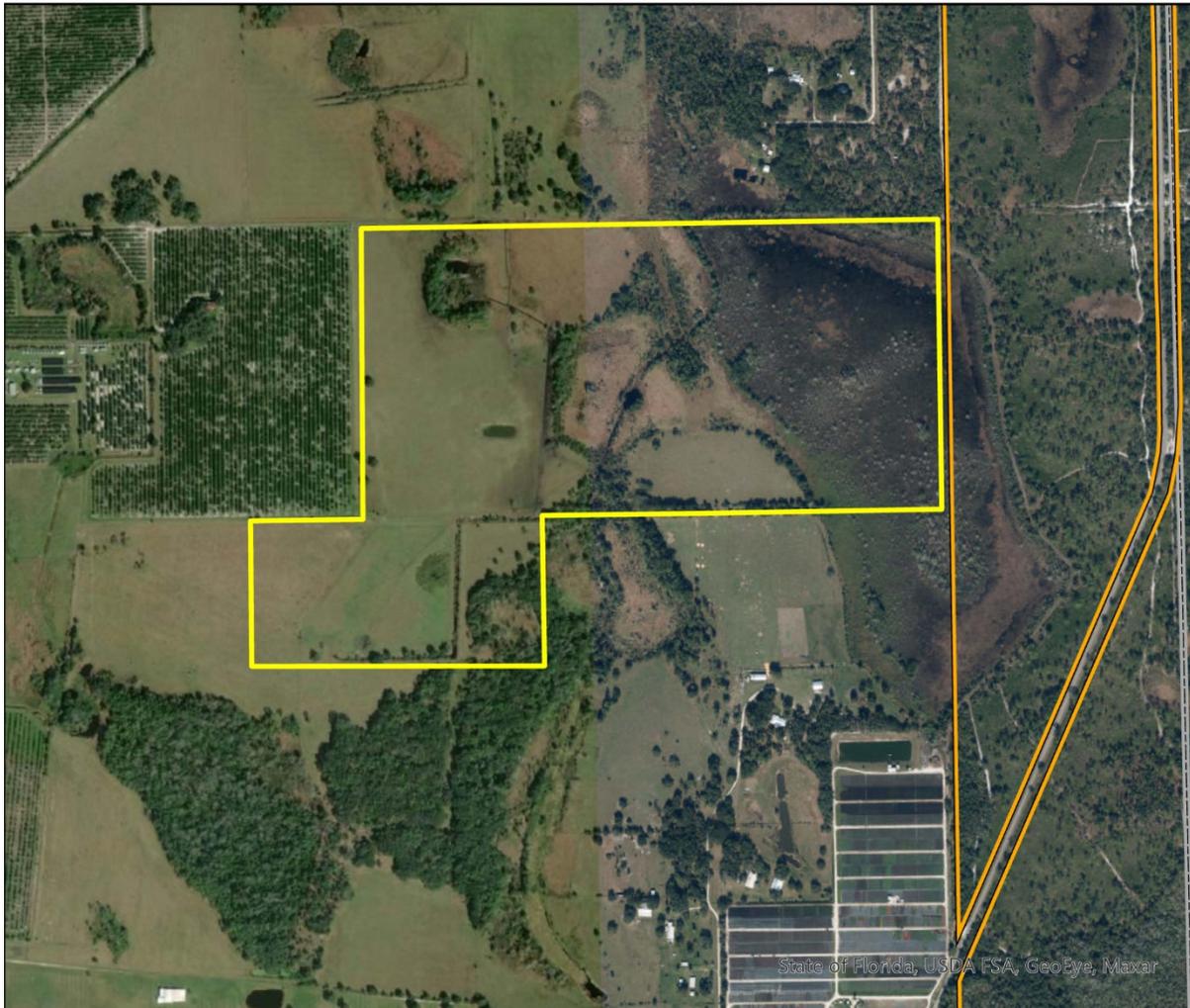


NOVEMBER 2020



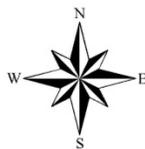
Hardee Flatwoods Proposed Addition

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSAL BOUNDARY AS OF NOVEMBER 2020



Map Produced by: N. Pasco, November 2020

Background: World Imagery Resolution = 0.3 meter



| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|  | Florida Forever Proposed Addition |
|  | Existing State Conservation Lands |

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Hardee Flatwoods Addition (Blackman Easement): Florida Forever Measure Evaluation 20201123

GIS ACRES = 160

| MEASURES | Resource Acres ^a | % of project |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 122 | 76% |
| Priority 3 | 27 | 17% |
| Priority 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 5 | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 150 | 93% |
| B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 4 | 9 | 5% |
| Priority 5 | 44 | 27% |
| Priority 6 | 55 | 34% |
| Total Acres | 107 | 67% |
| B3: Ecological Greenways | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 156 | 97% |
| Priority 3 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 5 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 6 | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 156 | 97% |
| B4: Under-represented Natural Communities | | |
| Upland Glade (G1) | 0 | 0% |
| Pine Rockland (G1) | 0 | 0% |
| Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2) | 0 | 0% |
| 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 | < 1% |
| Upland Hardwood Forest (G5) | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 1 | < 1% |
| B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species | | |
| G1 | 0 | |
| G2 | 0 | |
| G3 | 0 | |
| G4 | 1 | |
| G5 | 0 | |
| Total | 1 | |
| C4: Natural Floodplain Function | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 20 | 12% |
| Priority 4 | 61 | 38% |
| Priority 5 | 4 | 3% |
| Priority 6 | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 85 | 53% |

| MEASURES (continued) | Resource Acres ^a | % of project |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| C5: Surface Water Protection | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 4 | 42 | 26% |
| Priority 5 | 105 | 66% |
| Priority 6 | 13 | 8% |
| Priority 7 | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 160 | 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 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 19 | 12% |
| Priority 4 | 53 | 33% |
| Priority 5 | 4 | 3% |
| Priority 6 | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 76 | 48% |
| D3: Aquifer Recharge | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 2 | 1% |
| Priority 3 | 112 | 70% |
| Priority 4 | 46 | 29% |
| Priority 5 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 6 | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 160 | 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) | | |
| Total Sites | 0 | 0 sites |
| G1: Sustainable Forestry | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 1 | < 1% |
| Priority 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands | 84 | 53% |
| Total Acres | 85 | 53% |
| G3: Forestland for Recharge | 1 | < 1% |

^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.