

Revisions to ARC Meeting Materials

Agenda Item	Document	Page	Original	Revised
2	Public Hearing Summary	7	Attendance	Registered Participants
12	Amtel Farms PER	cover	Proposed Land Manager - FWC	Proposed Land Manager - FFS
12	Amtel Farms PER	2	The Florida Forest Service is proposing to manage this site for Operation Outdoor Freedom events and recreation activities, in coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's nearby wildlife management area.	Florida Forest Service (FFS), as the proposed manager of the Amtel Farms property, will coordinate state forest and any potential Wildlife Management Area (WMA) boundaries with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).
12	Buck Island Ranch PER	3	It would ideally be considered as a standalone project in the Partnerships and Regional incentives category for ranking purposes.	It would ideally be considered as a standalone project in the Less-than-Fee category for ranking purposes.
15	Agenda item	1	The Florida Forest Service has confirmed the parcels would be managed as part of Bombing Range Ridge.	The Florida Forest Service has confirmed the parcels would be managed as part of Lake Wales Ridge State Forest.
16	Agenda item	1	The Florida Forest Service has confirmed the property would be managed as part of the Natural Bridge Longleaf Preserve.	The Florida Forest Service has confirmed the property would be managed as a new state forest.

Summary of the May 20, 2020 Acquisition and Restoration Council Public Hearing

Date: May 20, 2020

Location: GoToWebinar

Time: 3:30 PM

Registered Participants:

Shauna Allen, DEP, ARC Staff Director
Deborah Burr, DEP, Division of State Lands (DSL)
Lynetta Griner, ARC Member
Tyler Maldonado, DEP, Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP)
Keith Singleton, DEP, DSL
Joel Albritton, DEP, DRP
Merrill Emfinger, DEP, DSL
Cat Ingram, DACS, Florida Forest Service (FFS)
Julia R. Nowlin
Lance Jacobsen, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
Joy Klein, Miami-Dade County
Annette Detzel, FWC
Melissa Hill
Erica Hernandez
Emily Bohnstengel, DEP, Office of Cabinet Affairs (OCA)
Diane Goldberg
Peter Kleinhenz
Deena Woodward
Earl Pearson, DEP, Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection (ORCP)
Hilary Swain, Archbold Biological Station
Simone James, DEP, DSL
Bruce Ritchie
Keith Fountain
Gladys Delgadillo, Conservancy of Southwest Florida (CSF)
Kent Wimmer, Defenders of Wildlife
Nathan Pasco, Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)
Carole Tebay
Larame Ferry, FWC
Megan Seward
Carolin Ciarlariello, DEP, Office of General Counsel (OGC)
Lee Killinger
Jen Lomberk

Amtel Farms

Fee Simple

Florida Forever Project Evaluation Report

Glades and Hendry Counties

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

FFS
2,207
\$12,517,471
October 28, 2019
Amtel Farms, Incorporated



*Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Florida Forever Project Evaluation Report
Amtel Farms
Glades and Hendry Counties*

Executive Summary

Amtel Farms is a fee simple proposal located in Glades and Hendry Counties. It is 2,207 acres GIS (2,213.95 acres according to the county property cards) and has a just value of \$12.5 million. It was submitted by Mr. Lane Boy, representing the landowner, Amtel Farms, Incorporated.

Acquisition of Amtel Farms would create a strategic northern extension of wildlife corridor to facilitate Florida panther movement across the Caloosahatchee.

Florida Forest Service (FFS), as the proposed manager of the Amtel Farms property, will coordinate state forest and any potential Wildlife Management Area (WMA) boundaries with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). It is currently leased for cattle grazing. There is no hunting lease.

Amtel Farms has 3.75 miles of frontage on the north shore of the Caloosahatchee River and is accessed by Marshall Field Road, east of the town of Labelle. The proposed project is adjacent to conservation easements managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) including Cypress Creek Grove and Lone Ranger Ranch along with other conservation easements southward.

Amtel Farms is within FWC's Dispersal Zone for the Florida panther. An abundant Florida black bear population uses this area and crested caracaras frequent the pastures.

The majority of the acreage is improved pasture and woodland pasture. The most extensive natural community on the site is mesic hammock, distributed in a series of large patches of property.

Amtel Farms has 35 acres of under-represented natural community - 20 acres of mesic flatwoods and 15 acres of dry prairie in relatively good condition. About 9% of the property is wetlands, with a few small depression marshes. One basin swamp dominated by pond cypress was observed from a distance. The entire site would provide for surface water protection and groundwater recharge and increase the number of acres available for natural resource based public recreation or education.

Altered areas include ditches/canals, artificial ponds, the berm along the river, a sparse network of roads, and a few unoccupied structures in the eastern portion of the woodland pasture. Invasive exotic plants are common throughout the property.

If approved for addition to the 2021 Priority List, this project could be added to the Caloosahatchee Ecoscape project boundary. The land would be designated as essential.



*Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Florida Forever Project Evaluation Report
Buck Island Ranch
Highland County*

now used as a hayfield and is part of the irrigation project with the South Florida Water Management District's phosphorous reduction program. Woodland pasture covers approximately 1% of the parcel.

In addition to the ranch's location within designated FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for the Coopers hawk and the short-tailed hawk, the FNAI database includes records on the site for caracara, woodstork, round-tailed muskrat, burrowing owl and Florida black bear. Kestrels and limpkins were observed during the field assessment, though no evidence of nesting was found. Eastern indigo snake, snail kite, and Florida panther have also been documented or reported.

Acquiring this proposal would protect 20 recorded archaeological sites.

Buck Island Ranch works with an extensive network of partners such as water management districts, universities, local ranchers and the USDA, to implement their research and resource protection goals. Outreach to other potential partners is ongoing.

This proposal is a one-of-a-kind research and cow-calf operation in Florida. It would ideally be considered as a standalone project in the Less-than-Fee category for ranking purposes. As a single ownership, it should be designated essential.

If acquired as a less-than-fee proposal, Buck Island Ranch would continue to be managed by the ABS, with periodic oversight of the Division of State Lands.

ITEM 15:

Vote on whether to amend the Bombing Range Ridge Florida Forever Project Boundary to add five parcels totaling approximately 995.0 acres in Polk County with a tax assessed market value of \$531,207.

LOCATION:

Polk County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Lost Oak amendment proposed by Rick Hartman with Hartman Real Estate, adds five parcels in Polk County totaling approximately 995.0 acres to the Bombing Range Ridge Florida Forever project. The parcels are co-owned by Pomcor Longview LLC, Indian Prairie Groves LLC, J.F. Ranch LLC, and Pomcor II LLC. Approximately 200 acres of the proposed boundary amendment are protected under a conservation easement held by the South Florida Water Management District. The proposal has a combined tax assessed value of \$531,207.

The five parcels are within the Bombing Range Ridge Florida Forever boundary and are proposed for fee simple acquisition. All landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. The Florida Forest Service has confirmed the parcels would be managed as part of Lake Wales Ridge State Forest. The property would provide additional protection to the conservation area and allow expanded recreational opportunities.

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. The proposal area should be designated as essential. The proposal adds most of the lands owned by the property owners that are not already included in the Bombing Range Ridge Florida Forever site (867 acres). The project will remain in the Critical Natural Lands category with the proposed addition.

Project History:

Public acquisition of this project would conserve and protect significant habitat for native species and endangered and threatened species. The Bombing Range Ridge project was added to the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council's 1997 Conservation and Recreation Lands Priority list at their December meeting. This fee simple acquisition consisted of approximately 39,073 acres, multiple owners, and a 1997 taxable value of \$15,238,510.

On November 30, 2018, The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACCS) closed on a 4,468.16-acre Easement owned by the Goolsby Ranch. The tax assessed value for the remaining acres to be acquired in this project per property appraiser information (2018) is \$30,062,405.

FNAI Review:

According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), nearly the entire proposal contributes to FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities, Ecological Greenways, Aquifer Recharge and Surface Water Protection.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

ITEM 16:

Vote on whether to amend the Natural Bridge Creek Florida Forever Project Boundary to add seven parcels totaling approximately 170.0 acres in Walton County with a tax assessed market value of \$259,083.

LOCATION:

Walton County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Natural Bridge Creek Addition amendment proposed by the Conservation Advisors LLC, adds seven parcels in Walton County totaling approximately 170.0 acres to the Natural Bridge Creek Florida Forever project. The property consists of six parcels owned by Amos and Judy Hester. The parcels have a combined tax assessed value of \$259,083.

The property is within the Natural Bridge Creek Florida Forever boundary and is proposed for fee simple acquisition. The landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. The Florida Forest Service has confirmed the property would be managed as a new state forest. The vast majority of the 170-acre project is forested and one parcel contains a small segment of Natural Bridge Creek, a sandy-bottomed seepage stream originating from the small springs and uplands of the Florida Forever site that winds over limestone outcrops before flowing into the upper Choctawhatchee River watershed. The addition would ensure the property remains a source and shelter for some of North America's rarest and most beautiful plants, wildlife and unique water resources.

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. The proposal area should be designated as essential. After approval of this addition, the Hester family will own 1,967 acres within the Florida Forever project. The project will remain in the Critical Natural Lands category with the proposed addition.

Project History:

Acquisition would provide a buffer for Natural Bridge Creek, protect surface water, functional wetlands and aquifer recharge, and preserve underrepresented natural communities. On August 17, 2012 the current project was presented to ARC and accepted for review. It was added to the Florida Forever Priority List as a Critical Natural Lands projects on December 14, 2012. The project was submitted for acquisition in fee or conservation easement by the landowners, Mr. Benton Hester and Ms. Judith Hester. Their family has managed it as pinelands since World War II. The tax assessed value for the remaining acres to be acquired in this project per property appraiser information (2018) is \$1,971,331.

FNAI Review:

According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 100% of the proposal contributes to Surface Water Protection and 97% contributes to Aquifer Recharge. On all other measures the proposal contributes 15% or less.