

Florida Springs Coastal Greenway

Substantially Complete

Citrus County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1995
<i>Project Acres</i>	60,573
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	52,163
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$51,151,750
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	8,410
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$64,319,376

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Florida Springs Coastal Greenway project will conserve the natural coastline of Citrus County and protect the water quality of the spring runs and estuaries where endangered manatees congregate. The project aims to conserve the salt marshes, clear spring runs, hammocks and flatwoods affected by rapidly encroaching development in this fast-growing part of the state. The project will preserve natural lands that link with conservation lands to the south to provide public resource-based recreation.

General Description

The project is a critical link between conservation lands needed to preserve the northern peninsular Gulf Coast. It includes three tracts along the karst coastline of Citrus County. The Crystal River tract, a significant part of the headwaters of the Crystal River, is a crucial habitat for the Gulf Coast manatee population and a prime nesting location for bald eagles and ospreys. Natural communities within the tract include floodplain marsh, freshwater tidal swamp, tidal marsh and upland hammock; it also contains some pine plantations.

The St. Martins River tract is predominantly hydric hammock, bottomland forest, salt marsh, mangrove islands and spring-run streams, all in good to excellent condition, and it borders the St. Martins Marsh Aquatic Preserve. Though much of its timber has been harvested and a quarter is in pasture, the Homosassa Reserve/Walker Property is important as a corridor between Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area, the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge and the conservation lands to the north. The archaeological significance of this area is high. Citrus County is one of the fastest growing in the state, and residential development is a serious threat. Development will increase boat traffic, which is the greatest current threat to the manatee population.



FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
Florida manatee	G2G3T2/S2S3
Florida scrub-jay	G1G2/S1S2
Eastern indigo snake	G3/S2?
Green sea turtle	G3/S2S3
Gopher tortoise	G3/S3
Florida mouse	G3/S3
Swallow-tailed kite	G5/S2
Florida black bear	G5T4/S4
Hawksbill sea turtle	G3/S1
<i>tampa vervain</i>	G2/S2
Florida olive hairstreak	G5T2/S2
Gulf salt marsh mink	G5T2/S2

Public Use

The project will be managed as state preserves and a state forest, providing recreational opportunities such as fishing, canoeing, hiking and camping.

Acquisition Planning

1927

In 1927, Bluebird Springs (5.5 acres) was dedicated as a park, all of which would be in the project boundary when it was created.

1943

On June 15, 1943, Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge (30,842 acres) was established, of which 215 acres would be in the project when it is created.

1993

On March 31, 1993, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved the addition of 51 acres to the Conservation and Recreational Lands project boundary.

1994

On November 19, 1994, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council amended the Crystal River project to add three tracts that include Three Sisters Springs (56 acres). On that date, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council also combined three Conservation and Recreational Lands projects (Crystal River, St. Martins and Homosassa Reserve) and renamed the project Florida Springs Coastal Greenway.

The project breakdown is as follows: Crystal River (approximately 14,758 acres) Phase I: Crystal River II; Phase II: Crystal Cove—major owner is Burnip and Sims (acquired); Phase III: Crystal River State Reserve—major owner is Hollins (acquired). St. Martins (approximately 14,040 acres) Phase I: Large ownerships within Area I as identified in Project Design; Phase II: Other ownerships within Area I and large ownerships within Area II; Phase III: Other ownerships within Area II; and Phase IV: ownerships in Area III. Major tracts have been acquired; only smaller strategic tracts and offshore islands remain.





Homosassa Reserve (approximately 8,577 acres) Phase I: Rooks tract (acquired); the Walker tract (acquired by the Southwest Florida Water Management District) and other ownerships except in Sections 28, 33, 34 and 7; Phase II: minor ownerships in Sections 28 and 33, the 160-acre Villa Sites Addition to Homosassa Sub in Section 34, also the 134-acre Johnson parcel in Section 7. All large and strategic ownerships with willing sellers have been acquired except for the Black ownership, an unwilling seller.

1995

On March 10, 1995, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 424-acre addition (in the former Crystal River project) to the project boundary. The addition was sponsored by the landowners, James C. and Alice H. Rhoades, and had a 1994 taxable value of \$821,700.

On October 30, 1995, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 200-acre addition (in the former Crystal River project) to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by landowner Corneal B. Myers, consisted of one parcel and a 1994 taxable value of \$400,000.

1996

On October 30, 1996, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council removed 117 acres from the project and transferred this project to the Substantially Complete Category.

1997

On March 14, 1997, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 80-acre addition (in the former Crystal River project) to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by landowner Dixie Hollins, consisted of one parcel and a 1996 taxable value of \$64,000.

1998

On October 15, 1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council designated an additional 156 acres as essential. Previous essential parcels included land acquired as of January 26, 1995, and the Black ownership (in the former Homosassa Reserve project).

2001

On April 6, 2001, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the addition of 149.34 acres to the project and adopted Group A and Group B to the Florida Forever Priority List and moved this project to Group B.

2003

On December 5, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council moved this project to Group A of the 2004 Florida Forever Priority List.

2004

On February 6, 2004, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a fee-simple, 142-acre addition (in the former Homosassa Reserve project) to the project boundary. The addition, sponsored by the Audubon Society and DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas and Division of Recreation and Parks, consisted of two landowners (Hampton Facilities LTD and Barr), two parcels and a 2003 taxable value of \$524,000.





2007

On March 27, 2007, the Upper Coastal Mitigation Bank (149 acres) was issued.

2010

On July 28, 2010, the Southwest Florida Water Management District closed on the 57-acre Three Sisters Springs property in Crystal River, paying with a combination of water-management district money and Florida Forever funds allocated to the Florida Communities Trust. It is primarily owned by the City of Crystal River and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

2011

On September 30, 2011, NCDC, LLC donated 25.82 acres (Old Greiner Parcel valued at \$146,285) to be managed by the Division of Recreation and Parks.

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council placed this project in the Climate Change Lands category of Florida Forever projects.

2014

On April 11, 2014, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a 747.96-acre boundary reduction.

2017

In 2017, a donation of 2.27 acres was made to the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge.

On December 7, 2017, the Southwest Florida Water Management District and DEP established the Nature Coast conservation easement (200 acres).

2019

On June 11, 2019, the Nature Coast Mitigation Bank was approved.

2020

On June 12, 2020, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved an addition of 149 acres in Citrus County to the project boundary.

2023

DEP acquired, in fee, 25.5 acres in Monroe County from Weichang Liu.

Coordination

The Southwest Florida Water Management District has acquired a major ownership within the project, as well as tracts adjacent to and south of the project area.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the Florida Springs Coastal Greenway project are: to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; to conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems, landscapes and forests; to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect; to provide areas, including recreational trails, for natural-resource-based recreation; and to preserve significant archaeological or historical sites.





Manager(s)

The Division of Recreation and Parks will manage the Crystal River and St. Martins River property and the northern part of the project, adjacent to the Cross Florida Greenway. The Florida Forest Service will manage the Homosassa Reserve/Walker Property.

Management Prospectus

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

Portions of the Florida Springs Coastal Greenway include lands that would be considered low-need tracts requiring basic resource management and protection. However, increasing public pressure for recreational access and a developing ecotourism industry may push portions of this project into the moderate to high-need category.

Management Implementation, Public Access, Site Security and Protection of Infrastructure

Within the first year after acquisition, management will concentrate on site security, public and fire management access, resource inventory and exotic removal. The Division of Recreation and Parks and the Florida Forest Service will provide access to the public while protecting sensitive resources. The project's natural resources will be inventoried, and a management plan developed within one year. Long-range plans for this property will generally be directed at the perpetuation of natural communities and the protection of listed species. An all-season burning program will use existing roads, black lines, foam lines and natural breaks to contain fires.

Areas of silviculture in the Crystal River project will be returned to their original character and species composition. About 25 percent of the Homosassa Reserve tract contains pasture suitable for reforestation and restoration. The resource inventory will be used to identify sensitive areas and to locate any recreational or administrative facilities. Unnecessary roads, fire lines and hydrological disturbances will be restored to the greatest extent practical. Infrastructure will be placed in disturbed areas and will be the minimum needed for public access and management.

Revenue-generating Potential

Initially, no revenue is expected to be generated. During restoration of pine plantations, some revenue to offset the cost of management may be generated from the sale of timber. Any estimate of revenue from this harvest depends upon a detailed assessment of the value of the timber. As the recreational component develops and additional staff are assigned, there may be potential for revenue from this source. No potential revenue estimates are available. On the Homosassa Reserve tract, the Florida Forest Service will sell timber as needed to improve or maintain desirable ecosystem conditions. These sales will provide variable revenue, but the revenue-generating potential for this tract is expected to be low.

Cooperators in Management Activities

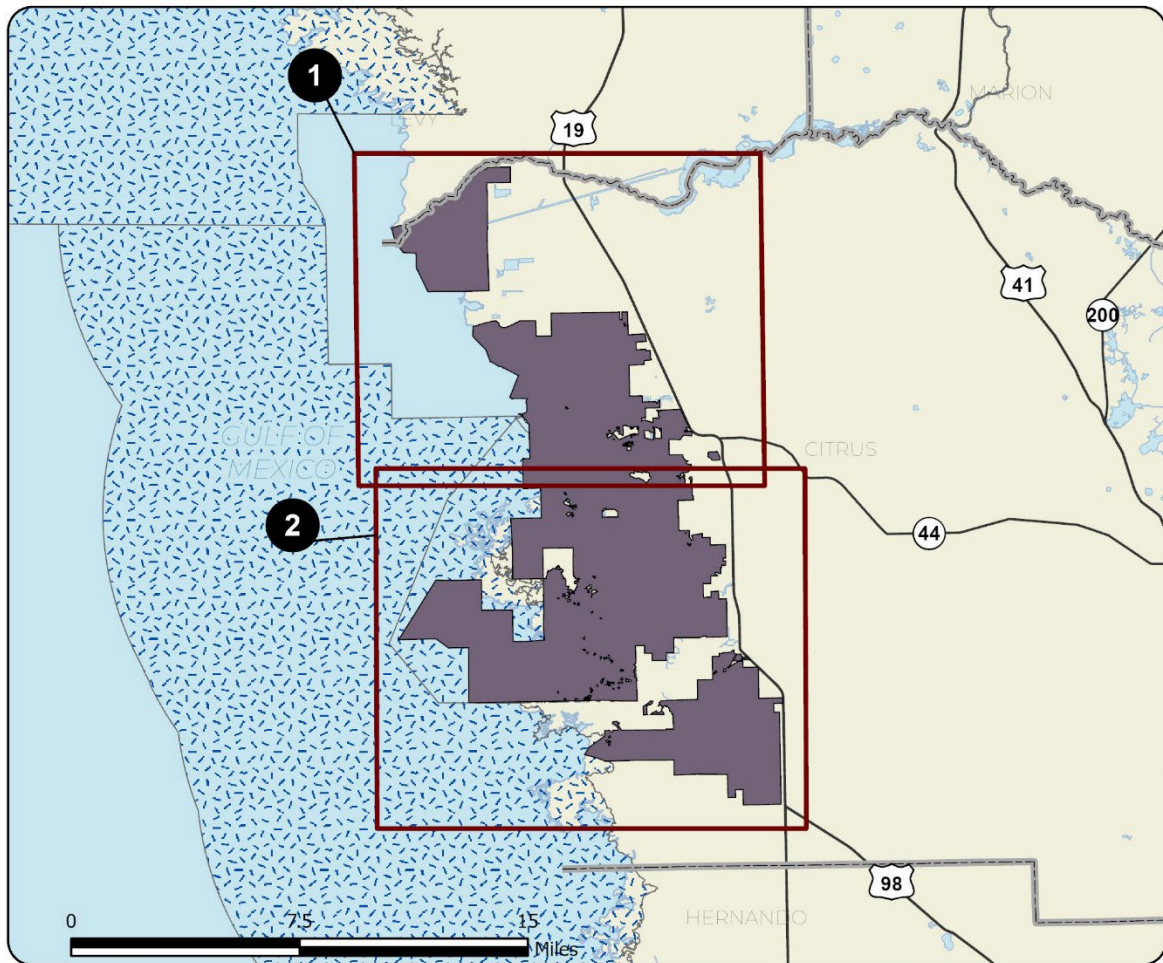
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is recommended as a cooperating manager for hunts to eliminate feral hogs and to manage certain species. Because of the proximity of certain parcels to the Cross Florida Greenway and the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge, the Division of Recreation





and Parks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can be cooperative managers on parts of the project. The Florida Forest Service will cooperate with other state agencies, local governments and interested parties as appropriate. Citrus County and the City of Crystal River may also cooperate in management.

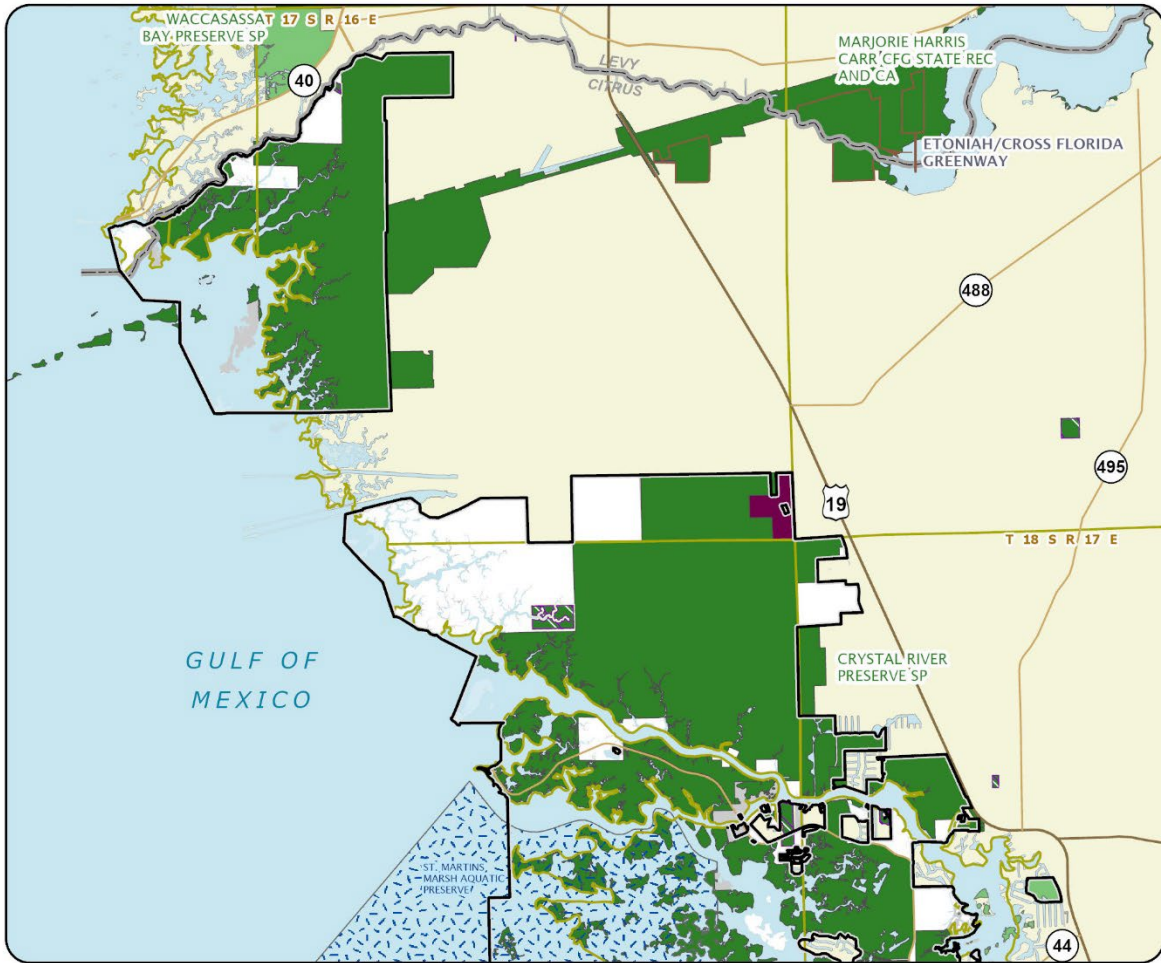




FLORIDA SPRINGS COASTAL GREENWAY: OVERVIEW

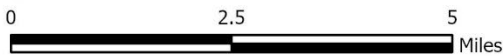
CITRUS COUNTY

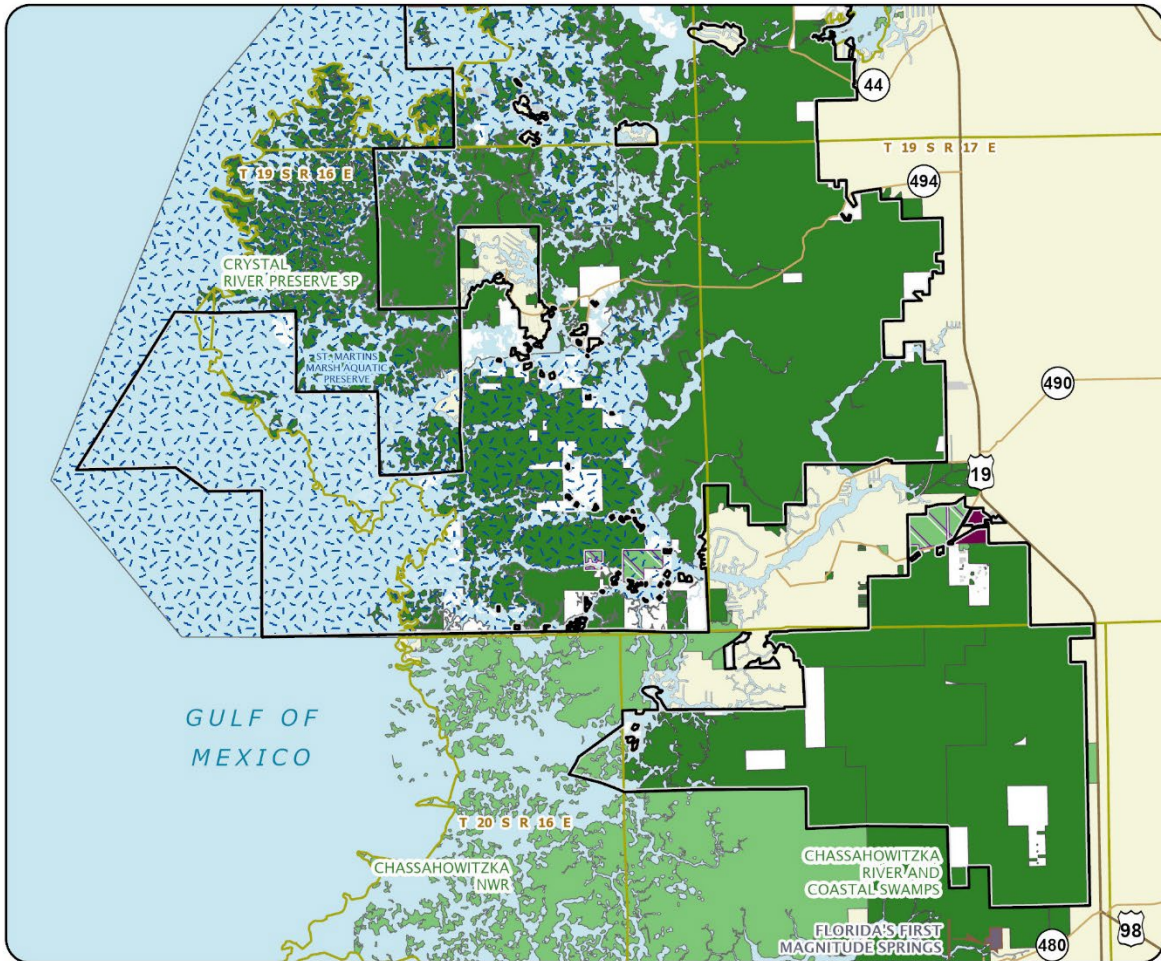




FLORIDA SPRINGS COASTAL GREENWAY: MAP 1

CITRUS COUNTY





FLORIDA SPRINGS COASTAL GREENWAY: MAP 2

CITRUS COUNTY

