

Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Springs State Park

Planning Region: Suwannee River

County: Gilchrist County

Lease/Management Agreement Number: 4814

Overview

Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Spring State Park protects a group of significant springs that lay along the Santa Fe River, including two second magnitude springs, Gilchrist Blue Spring and Naked Spring. The Gilchrist Blue Spring run extends nearly one quarter mile in length and is one of the most significant spring runs in the Santa Fe Basin. The Gilchrist Blue Spring run and Naked Spring run are recognized for their diverse submerged aquatic vegetation. Gilchrist Blue spring is well known for its outstanding water clarity and abundance of wildlife including turtles, fish, and invertebrates.

Total Acreage: 402

Natural Communities	Acres
Alluvial Forest	30.45
Basin Swamp	0.20
Bottomland Forest	37.07
Floodplain Swamp	24.19
Limestone Outcrop	0.07
Spring-Run Stream	3.98
Sandhill	177.37
Sinkhole	1.23
Sinkhole Lake	0.16
Upland Hardwood Forest	26.02

Altered Land Cover	Acres
Abandoned Field/Abandoned Pasture	31.57
Developed	23.41
Borrow Area	0.07
Successional Hardwood Forest	40.30
Utility Corridor	6.33

Acquisition: Ruth B. Kirby Gilchrist Blue Spring State Park was initially acquired on October 6, 2017 with funds from the Florida Forever Trust Fund.

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Resource Management Component Objectives

Hydrology

- Evaluate and mitigate the impacts of soil erosion in the park.
- Conduct/obtain an assessment of the park's hydrological restoration needs.
- Restore natural hydrological conditions and functions to approximately 2 acres of spring-run stream natural community.

Natural Communities

- Complete a comprehensive floral and faunal survey and create/update the park's baseline plant and animal list.
- Within 10 years, have 250 acres of the park maintained within the optimum fire return interval.
- Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 276 acres of sandhill natural community.

Imperiled Species

- Develop baseline imperiled species occurrence inventory lists for plants and animals.
- Monitor and document 4 selected imperiled animal species in the park (West Indian Manatee, Suwannee alligator snapping turtle, the gopher tortoise and imperiled bird species).
- Monitor and document 1 selected imperiled plant species in the park (Rain Lily).

Invasive and Nuisance Species

- Annually treat all 0.005 infested acres of invasive plant species in the park which are currently distributed over 57 gross acres.
- Implement control measures on 1 invasive animal species in the park (Feral hogs).

Cultural Resources

- Assess and evaluate the physical condition of all cultural sites in the park.
- Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological resources.
- Bring 1 of 7 recorded cultural resources into good condition.

Land Use Component Objectives

Conceptual Land Use

Park Entrance

- Relocate park entrance
- Develop new paved entrance road and ranger station

Main Day Use Area

- Redesign main day use area
- Relocate paddling/tubing launch.

Camping Area

- Develop a 30-campsite loop.
- Develop 10 tent only sites.
- Add one new sewer dump station and one bathhouse.

Park Trail Network

- Improve existing hiking trails.
- Develop and add new interpretive panels and signage along trails.

Support Area

- Add up to two new site-built residences.
- Add a two-bay shop.
- Add one equipment shelter.

Optimum Boundary

Parcels that lie to the east of the park have been included to enhance protection the Santa Fe River floodplain, two additional named springs, and to provide a greenway connection between Gilchrist Blue Springs and Poe Springs County Park (Alachua County). The proposed Non-DRP Conservation lands to the east of the park would also further the greenway connection between Gilchrist Blue Springs and Poe Springs County Park.

Additional parcels along the park's eastern boundary that are under single ownership have also been included. Digital elevation models indicated that the largest of these parcels contains an extensive area of floodplain and potential karst features. These parcels as well as additional property identify to the park's southwest would buffer the park from potential future development and provide enhanced floodplain and spring shed protection.