
Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park

Planning Region: Gulf Coast

County: Citrus County

Lease/Management Agreement Number: 3786

Overview

Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park protects and preserves a first magnitude spring, and actively works towards the rehabilitation and conservation of native species. The park contains critical habitat for the Florida Manatee and plays an important role in connecting vital habitat tracts for the Florida black bear and other species. The park contains rare natural communities such as hydric hammock and encapsulates history dating back to Native American utilization all the way through the 1900s when it was a popular roadside tourist attraction.

Total Acreage: 200.25

Natural Communities	Acres
Depression Marsh	2.82
Dome Swamp	2.61
Hydric Hammock	133.82
Mesic Flatwoods	11.03
Mesic Hammock	8.44
Spring-Run Stream	4.35

Altered Land Cover	Acres
Canal/ditch	10.22
Developed	19.81
Spoil Area	7.74

Acquisition: Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park was initially acquired on December 30, 1988, by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida under the CARL program.

Resource Management Component Objectives

Hydrology

- Assess the park's hydrological restoration needs.
- Restore natural hydrological conditions and functions to approximately 4.35 acres of spring-run stream natural community.
- Evaluate and mitigate the impacts of soil erosion in the park.

Natural Communities

- Maintain 14 acres within the optimum fire return interval.
- Conduct natural community/habitat improvement activities on 5 acres of hydric hammock natural community.

Imperiled Species

- Update baseline imperiled species occurrence inventory lists for plants and animals.
- Monitor and document the West Indian Manatee.
- Monitor and document the southern tubercled orchid.
- Continue partnerships with FWC and USFWS in the rehabilitation of native imperiled species.

Invasive and Nuisance Species

- Annually treat 30 gross acres that are equivalent to 1.5 infested acres of invasive plant species in the park.
- Implement control measures on feral hogs.

Cultural Resources

- Assess and evaluate 14 of 14 recorded cultural resources in the park.
- Compile reliable documentation for all recorded historic and archaeological resources.
- Bring the boathouse into good condition.

Land Use Component Objectives

Conceptual Land Use

Wildlife Exhibit Area

- Raise habitats that are threatened by flooding.
- Renovate the Wildlife Encounters Building.
- Make necessary renovations to outdated exhibits including:
 - a. Expand the Florida Panther exhibit
 - b. Replace the Shorebird Aviary
 - c. Renovate the Barn and Barred Owl exhibit
 - d. Renovate the Reptile Exhibit
 - e. Renovate Bird of Prey night house and exhibit
- Renovate Discover Center
- Improve interpretation and signage.
- Renovate and address Manatee Paddock maintenance issues.
- Develop plans to construct a bear rehabilitation facility.

Above-Ground Manatee Treatment Pool

- Formalize spring-fed manatee handling pool as the primary treatment area.

Underwater Observatory

- Renovate observatory to repair windows, replace flooring, and provide ADA accessibility.
- Replace air conditioning unit.

West Entrance

- Reconfigure the park entrance to reduce congestion and improve visitor flow.
- Implement traffic control measures.

Visitor Center/East Entrance

- Renovate Visitor Center.
- Renovate or replace boathouse and pontoon boats.
- Improve signage to direct visitors to the Visitor Center and designate as the point of arrival to the park.
- Remove the commercial storage building along US 19/98.

Tramway

- Highlight the "Mullet Train" with well-developed interpretation.
- Widen shoulder to delineate a pedestrian walkway.

Park Shoreline Erosion

- Coordinate with FWC to improve aquatic boundary delineation and enforcement of unauthorized access.
- Stabilize shoreline in spring/spring run.

Park Boundary Enforcement

- Coordinate with FWC and local law enforcement to eliminate vagrant camping.

Optimum Boundary

Several adjacent parcels of land abutting the southern park boundary are under consideration for potential park boundary expansion. Acquisition of these parcels would serve to protect Homosassa Springs and other karst features in the area while enhancing park security. Acquisition of parcels to the west of the park boundary would also support contiguous conservation land with other conserved lands as well as Crystal River State Preserve. Several parcels to the west and southwest of the park would be beneficial to acquire under other conservation efforts to connect the Withlacoochee State Forest to the park.

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