

Florida Forever Project Evaluation Report

Williamson Cattle Company Okeechobee County



Acquisition Type: Less-Than-Fee

Acres: 7,419

Just Value: \$42,933,132

Application Date: October 31, 2022

Project Sponsor: Florida Conservation Group

Prepared By:

Division of State Lands

Office of Environmental Services



Submitted to the Acquisition and Restoration Council
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Executive Summary

The proposed Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project consists of a combination of 23 whole and partial parcels located in in south-central Okeechobee County totaling 7,419 acres. The project is located just over five miles north of Lake Okeechobee and about 10 miles east of the Kissimmee River. The closest city is Okeechobee, 1.5 miles to the south. The Adams Ranch and River Property Florida Forever projects are nearby. The landowners have expressed interest in wanting to further conservation efforts while maintaining rights to the property. The project is proposed as a less-than-fee acquisition and has a total prorated tax assessed value of \$42,933,132.

Williamson Cattle Company is a working cattle ranch, horse farm and citrus grove. The property already contains three large permanent USDA Wetland Reserve Easements over two large basin marshes that are controlled for water storage. These marshes are the outstanding natural features of the property and provide critical habitat for an incredible diversity of bird species, including large numbers of state threatened Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), along with the migratory greater sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*). This project proposal is for the remaining acreage that surrounds this valuable habitat and is currently unprotected.

The project contains two historic features recorded in the Florida Master Site File. These features document the historic uses of this property and its importance to the broader cultural landscape of Okeechobee County. The project also has high potential for the presence of additional cultural resources, but only a portion of this property has been professionally surveyed for archaeological and/or historical sites.

The proposal's western boundary fronts Taylor Creek, a ditched waterway, and separates the property from Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Conservation Area and Taylor Creek Stormwater Treatment Area (STA). Relatively little managed land exists along Taylor Creek; this proposal offers an opportunity to protect about 2 miles of creek frontage, as well as ensuring buffers for existing wetland easements that protect water quality in the creek and Lake Okeechobee. The project is within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) study area the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Project (LOWRP).

The property consists of mostly improved pasture interspersed with natural communities. Mesic hammock is the most abundant natural community on the site. Mesic flatwoods is also present, along with notable patches of scrub and scrubby flatwoods. Wetland communities consist of basin marsh, basin swamp, dome swamp with depression marsh scattered throughout the pastures.

Rare species documented on the property include wood stork (*Mycteria Americana*), little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), roseate spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), the crested caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) and the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). Also observed during the site visit was Southern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*) and two rare plant species, pine pinweed (*Lechea divaricata*) and common wild pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*) Almost 40% of the project area is located within Priority 2 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network (FEGN).

An interagency team conducted a site visit to the project site on January 31, 2023. Information included in this project evaluation report is a result of this site visit.

If approved for addition to the 2024 Florida Forever Priority List, the project should be considered as a standalone project in the Less-than-Fee category. All 7,419 acres proposed for acquisition are considered essential due to the resources documented on the property (see Appendix C).

PURPOSE FOR ACQUISITION

The Williamson Cattle Company project will conserve a working landscape in a fast-disappearing rural region to protect critical ecological connectivity and provide valuable habitat for rare wildlife and plant species. This property will contribute to the protection of quantity and quality of water that flows into Lake Okeechobee and bolster both east-west and north-south landscape corridors that will connect existing conservation areas within the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge.

Acquisition of this project would serve to:

- increase the protection of Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community, and landscape levels
- provide surface and groundwater protection and protect natural floodplain functions
- protect, restore, and maintain the quality and natural functions of land, water, and wetland systems
- conserve and protect a portion of Florida's rural landscape in order to provide and enhance wildlife corridors for rare and imperiled species
- ensure that sufficient quantities of water are available to meet the current and future needs of natural systems and the citizens of the state

LOCATION AND PROXIMITY TO OTHER MANAGED AREAS

The Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever proposal is 7,419 (per application; 7,420 as determined in GIS) acres located in south-central Okeechobee County, just over five miles north of Lake Okeechobee and about 10 miles east of the Kissimmee River approximately 1.5 miles north of the town of Okeechobee. It is held by a single owner and is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition. There are currently 3 large USDA Wetland Reserve Program easements in the interior of the property; this proposal is to protect the remaining acreage of this working cattle ranch.

The proposal's western boundary fronts Taylor Creek, a ditched waterway, and separates the property from Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Conservation Area and Taylor Creek Stormwater Treatment Area (STA). Bordering the east side of the property are South Florida Water Management District conservation easements and several Wetlands Reserve easements. Outside this cluster of conservation land, there are no other managed areas within 2 miles. Relatively little managed land exists along Taylor Creek; this proposal offers an opportunity to protect about 2 miles of creek frontage, as well as ensuring buffers for existing wetland easements that protect water quality in the creek and Lake Okeechobee.

RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI)

This evaluation is based on information gathered from the proposal, 1999, 2004, and 2010 aerial photography, US Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic maps, Florida Cooperative

Landcover Data (FL FWCC and FNAI, Florida Cooperative Land Cover Map, version 3.4), the FNAI database, and information gleaned from the site visit conducted on January 31, 2023. The proposal is roughly square, 4 miles on each side with two large holes resulting from the existing wetland easements. A third wetland easement is only partially enclosed by the proposal, and a narrow strip of land curves to the east around the easement's eastern edge. US 441 fronts the western edge of the main block for about 2.5 miles; west of US 441, an additional tract of about 750 acres, also part of the proposal, extends west to Taylor Creek.

The property grades from an elevation of just over 60 feet above Mean Sea Level (MSL) at its highest elevations on the eastern edge to about 25 feet above MSL at its western edge. The eastern and northern portions of the proposal drain to the interior wetland easements; outflow from these runs west via natural and artificial channels into Taylor Creek, which flows south to Lake Okeechobee. The pastures and groves in the southeastern section of the property are drained by a series of interconnected ditches; these likely flowed historically into Mosquito Creek, but topographic data suggests that these now drain into the northernmost wetland easement, and in turn to Taylor Creek.

About 17% of the property is made up of natural communities. Mesic hammock is the most abundant natural community on the site. Larger patches of hammock are found adjoining the western wetland reserve easement, in a large patch at the northwest corner of the property, and along a drainage at the western edge. Examples of this community are also found as isolated fragments scattered through the pastures. Mesic hammocks on the property have a canopy of live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*), with some swamp laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*). Southern needleleaf (*Tillandsia setacea*) grows commonly on limbs of live oaks, while cabbage palms often have epiphytic growth of golden polypody (*Phlebodium aureum*). The relatively open shrub layer consists of young cabbage palm, along with American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), shortleaf wild coffee (*Psychotria sulzneri*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), and rougeplant (*Rivina humilis*). Vines are uncommon, although grape (*Vitis* sp.) occasionally can be found. These hammocks generally show signs of soil disturbance by hogs and cattle, although herbaceous species including big carpetgrass (*Axonopus furcatus*), basketgrass (*Oplismenus* sp.), pellitory (*Parietaria* sp.), and West Indian chickweed (*Drymaria cordata*) are present.

Basin swamp occupies about 3% of the property in an irregular band extending east from the large wetland easement in the center of the ranch property. This community was not observed closely during the site visit, but the edges were seen to have a canopy of cypress and red maple. Old world climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*, FISC-I) was not widespread but was noted on the edge of this swamp, where it reached into the canopy in some places.

Depression marshes are widely scattered throughout the pastures. Although generally 5 acres or less in size, these isolated wetlands together make up 2% of the land. The depression marshes vary in depth and have probably been affected by past hydrological modifications to drain the pastures. These marshes are herb-dominated wetlands that vary in how much they have been affected by grazing. Some consisted mainly of pasture grasses with scattered soft rush (*Juncus effusus* ssp. *solutus*) and a wetter central area with West Indian marsh grass (*Hymenachne amplexicaulis*, FISC-I) and torpedo grass (*Panicum repens*, FISC-I), while others were dominated by concentric zones of native plants depending on water depth and frequency of flooding. More intact marshes have a dense herbaceous layer, commonly including maidencane (*Panicum hemitomon*), pickerelweed (*Pontederia cordata*), and

manyflower marshpennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*). Other species seen include blue maidencane (*Amphicarpum muehlenbergianum*), purple bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus* var. *glaucopsis*), Virginia buttonweed (*Diodia virginiana*), spikerush (*Eleocharis* sp.), primrosewillow (*Ludwigia* sp.), sand cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*), and cattail (*Typha* sp.). Limpograss (*Hemarthria altissima*, FISC-II) sometimes encroaches from the adjacent pastures, and shrubs such as elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *canadensis*), southern bayberry (*Morella cerifera*), coastalplain willow (*Salix caroliniana*), and Peruvian primrosewillow (*Ludwigia peruviana*, FISC-II) occur in some marshes, perhaps as a result of hydrologic alteration or lack of fire.

Mesic flatwoods on the site are variable, with some being relatively open and healthy, and others with a heavy shrub layer stifling the growth of grasses and other herbaceous plants. Canopy is south Florida slash pine (*Pinus elliottii* var. *densa*), with sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*) and laurel oak (*Quercus hemisphaerica*) occasionally joining young pines in the subcanopy. The shrub layer varies from moderately open to dense, with saw palmetto being most common, often mixed with sand live oak, southern bayberry, rusty staggerbush (*Lyonia ferruginea*) groundsel tree (*Baccharis halimifolia*), and coastalplain staggerbush (*Lyonia fruticosa*). Saw greenbrier (*Smilax bona-nox*) and occasionally old world climbing fern grow on the shrubs. Wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*) is frequent in open gaps between shrub patches, along with bluestem (*Andropogon* sp.), slender flattop goldenrod (*Euthamia caroliniana*), fourpetal St. John's wort (*Hypericum tetrapetalum*), Caesar's weed (*Urena lobata*, FISC-I), bottlebrush threeawn (*Aristida spiciformis*), sedges (*Cyperaceae*), cypress witchgrass (*Dichantherium ensifolium*), roundpod St. John's wort (*Hypericum cistifolium*), wild pennyroyal (*Piloblephis rigida*), goldenrod (*Solidago* sp.), shiny blueberry (*Vaccinium myrsinites*), and Adam's needle (*Yucca filamentosa*).

Two patches of scrubby flatwoods at higher elevations grade into mesic flatwoods and basin swamp lower on the slopes. Scrubby flatwoods on the property have a very open canopy of slash pine, a sparse subcanopy of sand live oak and myrtle oak (*Quercus myrtifolia*), and a patchy to dense layer of shrubby sand live oak, saw palmetto, myrtle oak, and Chapman's oak (*Quercus chapmanii*). The edges of this community have been invaded by weedy and pasture species including West Indian dropseed (*Sporobolus jacquemontii*), centipede grass (*Eremochloa ophiuroides*), and abundant grapevines, but the interior has a diversity of native herbs including wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*), wild pennyroyal (*Piloblephis rigida*), goldenaster (*Chrysopsis* sp.), sandyfield beaksedge (*Rhynchospora megalocarpa*), pineland scalypink (*Stipulicida setacea*). The rare pine pinweed (*Lechea divaricata*) was found in this natural community during the site visit.

Scrub intergrades with scrubby flatwoods in patches on the eastern slope of the property. Other than the absence of a pine canopy, this community is very similar to the scrubby flatwoods, with sand live oak, myrtle oak, saw palmetto and Chapman's oak and the same collection of herbs. As with the scrubby flatwoods, the edges of the scrub are relatively disturbed, with Caesar weed, West Indian dropseed, and vines present.

Two dome swamps occur on the property; one in the southern pasture, one in the western pasture and one was visited during the site visit. This swamp has a canopy of pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) with some cabbage palm in the midstory. Hog and cattle impact on this wetland were evident. The ground cover species are sparse and include tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*, FISC-I) and Caesar's weed, but also maiden fern (*Thelypteris* sp.),

marshpennywort (*Hydrocotyle sp.*), pellitory (*Parietaria sp.*), and lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*).

Four small basin marshes occur in the mesic hammocks near the northern boundary. These are typically in better condition than the depression marshes, with few impacts from livestock or hogs observed. The basin marsh observed has a mix of standing water and dense native herbs. Plants include dotted smartweed (*Persicaria punctata*), mermaidweed (*Proserpinaca sp.*), fascicled beaksedge (*Rhynchospora fascicularis*), arrowhead (*Sagittaria sp.*), maidencane, and pickerelweed.

A small irregular area at the margin between the basin swamp and the adjacent uplands and pastures is likely to be wet flatwoods. This area was not observed during the site visit. Two baygall wetlands near the southeast corner of the property have a canopy of sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*) and an emergent layer of slash pine. Shrubs and small trees include sweetbay and elderberry. A variety of herbaceous plants are present, including manyflower marshpennywort (*Hydrocotyle umbellata*), toothed midsorus fern (*Telmatoblechnum serrulatum*), maiden fern (*Thelypteris sp.*), false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), and Caesar's weed. Eastern poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) is common, and small amounts of old world climbing fern were also observed.

The most widespread landcover on the property is improved pasture, which makes up approximately 60% of the site. These pastures vary in their composition depending on the soils, with pastures dominated by bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*) in the northern and eastern parts of the property, and limpgrass pastures on more moist soils. In most cases, the pastures are a near-monoculture of the forage species, although West Indian dropseed, bluestem, and dogfennel (*Eupatorium capillifolium*) are often interspersed.

Approximately 850 acres, about 11% of the site, is citrus groves. During the site visit, those that were observed appeared to be relatively healthy groves, but they were not examined in detail.

At intergrades between improved pasture and natural communities, there are extensive areas of semi-improved pasture that have attributes of both pasture and the natural communities they are derived from. This cover type makes up about 6% of the property and includes both hammock-like stands of large live oaks and cabbage palms with bahiagrass and West Indian dropseed, as well as flatwoods-like pastures with frequent islands of saw palmetto and mature flat-topped pines. Small areas of mesic hammock and/or mesic flatwoods may be included in the areas mapped as semi-improved pasture. Some invasive plants were observed in the semi-improved pastures. Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) and chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*) grew sporadically out of saw palmetto clumps, and a somewhat dense infestation of praxelis (*Praxelis clematidea*) was seen in one area of hammock-like pasture.

Drainage ditches and canals are interspersed throughout the property, and Taylor Creek, which passes along the west edge of the property, is channelized as well. These modified waterways are typically surrounded by a vegetated fringe consisting of live oak and cabbage palm with vines such as greenbrier (*Smilax sp.*), hairy pod cowpea (*Vigna luteola*), and vetch (*Vicia sp.*). During the site visit, invasive plants including Caesar's weed, Brazilian pepper, West Indian marsh grass, and West Indian dropseed were observed to dominate the shrub

and herb layers on the banks in some locations, while native aquatic species such as marshpennywort and yellow pondlily are found in the channels themselves.

Developed areas make up only a small percentage of the property. These include occupied residences as well as the ranch office, barns and equipment storage structures, and a rustic hunt camp cabin with an associated picnic pavilion. These structures are typically surrounded by open, hammock-like vegetation of mature live oak and cabbage palm. The epiphytes on the oaks in these areas can be quite diverse including Florida butterfly orchid (*Encyclia tampensis*), common wild-pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*), shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*) in addition to the resurrection fern (*Pleopeltis michauxiana*) and southern needleleaf (*Tillandsia setacea*) that are more widespread on the property. Groundcover in these areas varies from turf or pasture grasses to mixed native herbs such as thin paspalum (*Paspalum setaceum*).

Several other altered landcover types make up a small percent of the proposal area. These include small artificial ponds, some of which may be former depression marshes that have been modified. Areas classified as clearings included a pasture-like area dominated by limpgrass situated between citrus groves and offsite residential development, and a small wildlife food plot. There is also a network of unpaved roads through the property.

Invasive plants are moderately common on the site. Caesar’s weed (FISC-I) is fairly widespread and was dense in some areas, particularly in semi-improved pastures. Infestations of *Praxelis* were also observed in two semi-improved pasture areas. Old world climbing fern was only sporadic, but extended to the tree canopy in one location. Invasive grasses were found in several of the marshes. Notably, only one patch of cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) was seen, which has been treated by the owner. A handful of other invasive species were also found.

Table 1. Natural communities and landcover types within Florida Forever proposal

| Community or Landcover | Acres | Percent of Proposal |
|-------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| mesic hammock | 753 | 10 |
| basin swamp | 223 | 3 |
| depression marsh | 157 | 2 |
| mesic flatwoods | 148 | 2 |
| scrub | 73 | <1 |
| scrubby flatwoods | 34 | <1 |
| wet flatwoods | 22 | <1 |
| baygall | 17 | <1 |
| wet prairie | 14 | <1 |
| basin marsh | 9 | <1 |
| dome swamp | 7 | <1 |
| pasture – improved | 4470 | 60 |
| agriculture | 852 | 11 |
| pasture – semi-improved | 462 | 6 |
| canal/ditch | 55 | <1 |
| artificial pond | 49 | <1 |

| Community or Landcover | Acres | Percent of Proposal |
|------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| developed | 39 | <1 |
| roads | 23 | <1 |
| clearing | 13 | <1 |

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

This resource assessment of the Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project proposal is based on field observations during the site visit and GIS analysis. This property is located just over five miles north of Lake Okeechobee and is in the Northern Okeechobee Inflow sub basin and the Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough watersheds.

Habitats on Williamson Cattle Company are dominated by improved pasture, interspersed with wetland forest and marshes. Examples of wetland habitats occurring on the property include herbaceous freshwater marshes, mixed wetland hardwoods, mixed scrub-shrub wetlands, bay swamps, lacustrine ponds, and artificial reservoirs. These wetland areas provide foraging and nesting habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, and other avian species. Examples of some of the species observed on the site visit include the blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*), purple gallinule (*Porphyrio martinicus*), glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), wood stork (*Mycteria Americana*), little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), roseate spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), great egret (*Ardea alba*), and greater yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*). Also, it can't be overstated the large numbers of state threatened Florida sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), along with the migratory greater sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis tabida*) located on the property – there were hundreds present. These two subspecies both rely on open, depressional freshwater wetlands for foraging, nesting, and roosting for the entirety of their life cycle. Degradation of freshwater wetlands and the conversion of these open pasture/prairie habitats that they inhabit are the primary threats facing the Florida sandhill crane.

Historically, native dry prairie and flatwoods would have been the dominant vegetative type found on the Williamson Cattle Company, but the majority of the property has been converted to improved pasture. Many wildlife species utilize and rely upon improved pasture, and this mosaic of native and improved pasture found on the Williamson Cattle Company provide food and cover for a variety of wildlife species. Examples of some of the species observed on the site visit utilizing this habitat type was the crested caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) and the gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). Also observed were white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), Southern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*), red-headed woodpeckers, kestrels (sub-species unknown), and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). These are all species associated with semi-open habitat types with sparse tree cover.

The FWC GIS analysis of the Cooperative Land Cover v3.6 indicates that Williamson Cattle Company comprises a mixture of many different community types including improved pastures (64%), citrus groves (12%), and mixed hardwood-coniferous (10%). Approximately 69% of the property has been identified as priority 1-2 for the Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project. The FNAI Element Occurrence database shows several records for listed species including a bald eagle and nest (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), crested caracara, gopher frog (*Lithobates capito*), and gopher tortoise. About a third of the property is within priority 2 of the FEGN.

Nearly all of the property, 93%, has a species richness for 3-9 imperiled species including a small portion having suitable habitat for the eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon couperi*), which has been documented on the property. Approximately 1,131 acres lies within a designated FWC Strategic Habitat Conservation Area (SHCA) for species including Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), short-tailed hawk (*Buteo brachyurus*), Florida scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), and Florida burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Williamson Cattle Company buffers the Taylor Creek on its westernmost boundary and contains wetlands and canals that are the headwaters of the Mosquito Creek, both of which flow into Lake Okeechobee. Nearly the entire project area (99%) is classified as having significant surface waters.

In summary, the Williamson Cattle Company is in a high ecological priority area of the state, in a fast-disappearing rural region that is threatened by habitat fragmentation caused by encroaching development and intensifying agriculture. Placing a conservation easement on the property would further conserve lands contributing to the statewide wildlife corridor and would be a natural extension of the protected lands occurring in the Northern Okeechobee Watershed and Lower Kissimmee Basin, facilitating landscape connectivity throughout the state. Protecting this additional acreage would also benefit numerous fish and wildlife species that inhabit the area, including imperiled species.

GOALS, MEASURES AND CRITERIA

GOAL A:

ENHANCE THE COORDINATION AND COMPLETION OF LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS

Measure A1:

The number of acres acquired through the state's land acquisition programs that contribute to the enhancement of essential natural resources, ecosystem service parcels, and connecting linkage corridors as identified and developed by the best available scientific data.

If acquired all 7,419 acres would contribute to the enhancement of essential natural resources, ecosystem service parcels and connecting linkage corridors.

Measure A2:

The number of acres protected through the use of alternatives to fee simple acquisition.

The entirety of the project (7,419 acres) is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition via conservation easement.

Measure A3:

The number of shared acquisition projects among Florida Forever funding partners and partners with other funding sources, including local governments and the federal government.

No funding partners have been identified for this project. Williamson Cattle Company is located within the CERP planning boundary. CERP is implemented through a federal-state partnership to restore, protect, and preserve the region's water resources by addressing the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of water. This partnership includes a 50/50 cost share agreement, in which federal funding cannot outpace state funding. Acquisition of this property could increase the state's contribution to CERP and therefore require the federal government to match that spending on other everglades restoration projects.

GOAL B:

INCREASE THE PROTECTION OF FLORIDA’S BIODIVERSITY AT THE SPECIES, NATURAL COMMUNITY, AND LANDSCAPE LEVELS

Measure B1:

The number of acres acquired of significant Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas.

The SHCA Florida Forever Conservation Needs layer identifies important remaining habitat conservation needs for 62 terrestrial vertebrates on private lands. Priority 1 and 2 represent habitat for species considered imperiled or critically imperiled in Florida. The Florida Forever Measure Evaluation (FFME) table (Appendix B) reports the site contains approximately 6,643 acres (90% of site) of SHCAs. This is divided between Priority 2 (36% of site), Priority 1 (25%), Priority 3 (22%), and Priority 5 (7%).

Measure B2:

The number of acres acquired of highest priority conservation areas for Florida's rarest species.

Habitat conservation priorities for 634 of Florida’s rarest species were mapped and divided into six priority classes. The FFME reports the proposed project contains approximately 6,827 acres (92% of site) of rare species habitat. The habitat is mostly divided between Priority 5 (41% of site), Priority 6 (32%), and Priority 4 (18% of site), with the remainder in Priority 3 (1%).

Table 2 lists the acres of habitat for each species that may be found on the site, based on the FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities. Please note that habitats for these species overlap, so that the sum total of habitat for all species is more than the total acreage of the priority conservation areas. Acreage for aquatic species includes a terrestrial buffer.

Table 2. Rare species habitat based on FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities

| Scientific Name | Common Name | Global Rank | Acres |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------|
| <i>Drymarchon couperi</i> | eastern indigo snake | G3 | 503 |
| <i>Caracara plancus</i> | crested caracara | G5 | 5,465 |
| <i>Mycteria americana</i> | wood stork | G4 | 281 |
| <i>Mustela frenata peninsulae</i> | Florida long-tailed weasel | G5T3? | 3,376 |

Measure B3:

The number of acres acquired of significant landscapes, landscape linkages, and conservation corridors, giving priority to completing linkages

The FFME reports approximately 6,320 acres (85%) of the proposed project contributes to protection of ecological greenways with 47% of the site falling within Priority 5 areas, and 38% in Priority 2. Prioritization is based on such factors as importance for wide-ranging species like Florida panther and Florida black bear, importance for maintaining a connected reserve network, and riparian corridors.

Measure B4:

The number of acres acquired of under-represented native ecosystems.

The Florida Forever natural community analysis includes only those communities that are under-represented on existing conservation lands. This analysis provides a conservative estimate of the extent of these communities, because it identifies only relatively undisturbed portions of these communities that occur within their historic range. The FFME lists the acreages of under-represented natural communities found on the site. Based on this analysis, the Williamson Cattle Company proposal contains 170 acres of mesic/wet flatwoods (2% of site) and 107 acres of scrub/scrubby flatwoods (1%).

Measure B6:

The percentage increase in the number of occurrences of imperiled species on publicly managed conservation areas.

This site supports habitat for many rare species of conservation concern. Multiple crested caracaras, a bald eagle, a wood stork, and a southeastern fox squirrel were observed during the site visit. Numerous gopher tortoise burrows and an individual tortoise were also seen. Several species reported from the property but not seen during the site assessment are listed in the table below; roseate spoonbill was observed on the wetlands reserve easement portion of the ranch, though not in the proposal area itself. Sandhill cranes were also observed during the site visit, but whether these were Florida sandhill cranes or migratory individuals cannot be determined.

Two listed plants, pine pinweed (*Lechea divaricata*) and common wild pine (*Tillandsia fasciculata*) were also seen during the site visit; more extensive surveys may reveal the additional species of rare plant.

The FFME lists the number of Element Occurrences by Global Rank (G-rank) that are found on the proposal. Note that the number of occurrences does not necessarily match the number of species in the following table because a) some species may have more than one occurrence on the proposal site, or b) some species observed on site do not meet the criteria for addition to the FNAI database at this time. The table below contains species falling into any of these observational categories, as well as species gleaned from other sources (e.g., Florida Breeding Bird Atlas) with different degrees of locational precision.

Table 3. Rare plants and animals documented or reported to occur within the proposed project

| Scientific Name | Common Name | Global Rank | State Rank | Federal Status | State Status |
|---|---------------------------|-------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| Rare plants documented on site | | | | | |
| <i>Lechea divaricata</i> | pine pinweed | G2* | S2 | N | E |
| <i>Tillandsia fasciculata</i> | common wild pine | G5 | SNR | N | E |
| Additional rare plants reported on site by applicant | | | | | |
| none | | | | | |
| Rare animals documented on site | | | | | |
| <i>Gopherus polyphemus</i> | gopher tortoise | G4 | S3 | C | ST |
| <i>Caracara plancus</i> | crested caracara | G5 | S2 | T | FT |
| <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> | bald eagle | G5 | S3 | N | N |
| <i>Mycteria americana</i> | wood stork | G4 | S2 | T | FT |
| <i>Sciurus niger niger</i> | southeastern fox squirrel | G5T5 | S3 | N | N |

| Additional rare animals reported on site by applicant | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|------|-----|---|----|
| <i>Drymarchon couperi</i> | eastern indigo snake | G3 | S2? | T | FT |
| <i>Antigone canadensis pratensis</i> | Florida sandhill crane | G5T2 | S2 | N | ST |
| <i>Egretta caerulea</i> | little blue heron | G5 | S4 | N | ST |
| <i>Platalea ajaja</i> | roseate spoonbill | G5 | S2 | N | ST |

GOAL C:

PROTECT, RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF NATURAL FUNCTIONS OF LAND, WATER, AND WETLAND SYSTEMS OF THE STATE

Measure C1:

The number of acres of publicly-owned land identified as needing restoration; enhancement, and management, acres undergoing restoration or enhancement; acres with restoration activities completed, and acres managed to maintain such restored or enhanced conditions; the number of acres which represent actual or potential imperiled species habitat; the number of acres which are available pursuant to a management plan to restore, enhance, repopulate, and manage imperiled species habitat; and the number of acres of imperiled species habitat managed, restored, and enhanced, repopulated, or acquired.

The property is offered for less-than-fee acquisition, intended to be utilized in a manner consistent with existing uses. The site’s extensive areas of pasture and agricultural lands would require considerable long-term commitment to restore to native species. This is likely well outside the scope of restoration commitment for a typical working cattle ranch. Flatwoods and other associated natural communities require frequent fire to remain healthy. The landowner indicated that controlled burns are regularly used in these areas and in pastures, and evidence of this was observed during the site visit. The existing management if continued should help to maintain the ecological integrity of portions of the site.

The invasive plant control needs of the property are moderate; Caesar’s weed is widespread on the property, and several other species such as old-world climbing fern appear to be spreading. Cogon grass was very limited, however, and is currently being controlled by the landowner. Continued aggressive treatment of this species and other invasive plants on the site will help to protect the natural values of the site. A baseline assessment to determine the full extent of invasive species is warranted if acquisition of an easement occurs.

There may be opportunities for additional hydrological restoration on the property. The former floodplain of the now-ditched Taylor Creek on the western edge of the site would be one location where restoration of hydric communities could be considered.

Measure C4:

The number of acres acquired that protect natural floodplain functions.

The FFME reports approximately 3,486 acres (47%) of the proposed project may contribute to the protection of natural floodplain function. This area is mostly divided between Priority 5 (20% of site) and Priority 6 (20%), with the remainder in Priorities 4 and 3 (6% and 1%, respectively). Priority 1 areas are the most natural with the lowest intensity land uses.

Measure C5:

The number of acres acquired that protect surface waters of the State.

The FFME reports approximately 7,347 acres (99%) of the proposed project could provide

protection for those surface waters of the State that currently remain in good condition. This area is divided between Priority 4 (34% of site), Priority 5 (33%), Priority 6 (19%), Priority 3 (8% of site), and Priority 2 (5%). These areas represent acreage that contributes to the protection of state-designated Outstanding Florida Waters, springs, rare fish habitat, or other surface waters.

Measure C8:

The number of acres of functional wetland systems protected.

The FFME reports approximately 401 acres (5%) of the proposed project would provide protection for functional wetland systems. This area is divided between Priority 4 (3% of site), Priority 5 (2%), Priority 6 (<1%), and Priority 3 (<1%). Priority 1 areas are the most natural with the lowest intensity land uses.

GOAL D:

ENSURE THAT SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES OF WATER ARE AVAILABLE TO MEET THE CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF NATURAL SYSTEMS AND THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE

Measure D1:

The number of acres acquired which provide retention and storage of surface water in naturally occurring storage areas, such as lakes and wetlands, consistent with the maintenance of water resources or water supplies and consistent with district water supply plans.

The project proposal is located within the South Florida Water Management District's Lower Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Planning Area. The property is not specifically included in any water resource development project listed in the water supply plan. However, the property contains approximately 492 acres of wetland plant communities or water features that provide hydrologic benefits through surface water storage and retention and groundwater recharge. Retaining these features would be consistent with the District's water supply plan.

Measure D2:

The quantity of water made available through the water resource development component of a district water supply plan for which a water management district is responsible.

The property is located within the Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Basin of the LOWRP. LOWRP is listed as a water resource development project in the Lower Kissimmee Basin Water Supply Plan. The purpose of this project is to increase water storage capacity in the watershed, resulting in improved Lake Okeechobee water levels, improved quantity, timing, and distribution of water to the Northern Estuaries, improved water supply for existing legal Lake Okeechobee Service Area (LOSA) users, and to restore wetlands within the project area. Alternative ASR (Alt ASR) would achieve these goals and objectives by reducing high-volume freshwater releases from Lake Okeechobee by utilizing aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) wells. The Williamson Cattle Company property is not specifically identified in the project plan. However, ensuring that the wetland plant communities remain intact, this property would be expected to retain somewhere between 400 to 500 acre-feet of water storage.

Measure D3:

The number of acres acquired of groundwater recharge areas critical to springs, sinks, aquifers, other natural systems, or water supply.

Recharge of the Surficial Aquifer System is primarily rain driven and the project proposal would provide 7,419 acres of potential recharge area.

The FFME reports approximately 7,420 acres (100%) of the proposed project would provide protection for groundwater recharge areas. This area is divided between Priority 5 (43% of site), Priority 6 (28%), Priority 4 (23%), and Priority 3 (6%). Prioritization is based on features that contribute to aquifer vulnerability such as swallets, thickness of the intermediate aquifer confining unit and closed topographical depressions, as well as areas within springshed protection zones and in proximity to public water supply wells.

Table 4. Spatial Analysis for Potential Water Quality Benefits of Williamson Cattle Company

| Categories | Scoring Criteria | Project Score |
|---|------------------|---------------|
| DEP High Profile Springs (In 1,2,3 or > spring sheds) | 12, 24, 36 | 0 |
| DEP Select Agricultural Land Use (0-30%, >30-65%, >65%) | 4,8,12 | 12 |
| DEP Florida Aquifer Vulnerability (FAVA) | 4,7,10 | 7 |
| DEP Special Nutrient Impaired WBIDs | 9 | 9 |
| DEP Distance to Major Lakes (100, 500, 1000 meters) | 8,7,6 | 0 |
| DEP Springsheds or within 5 miles | 10, 7 | 0 |
| DEP BMAPs | 10 | 10 |
| DEP Distance to Major Rivers (100, 500, 1000 meters) | 6,5,4 | 0 |
| Total Possible | 101 | 38 |

GIS Evaluation score is converted to a 1 to 5 value (low to high),

FINAL DEAR SCORE = 3 medium water quality protection benefits

GOAL E:

INCREASE NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED PUBLIC RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Measure E1 - E3

The number of new resource-based recreation facilities, by type, made available on public land.

The Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition with no public access.

GOAL F:

PRESERVE SIGNIFICANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORIC SITES

Measure F1:

The increase in the number of and percentage of historic and archaeological properties listed in the Florida Master Site File or National Register of Historic Places which are protected or preserved for public use.

As a Less-Than-Fee project, the Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project would not increase the number of, and percentage of historic and archaeological properties listed in the Florida Master Site File or National Register of Historic Places which are preserved for public use. However, through a conservation easement agreement that stipulates cultural resource protection, the Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project would protect historic and archaeological sites that are listed in the Florida Master Site File.

Measure F2:

The increase in the number and percentage of historic and archaeological properties that are in state ownership.

As a Less-Than-Fee project, Williamson Cattle Company would not meet Measure F2, as the number and percentage of cultural resources on the project would remain privately owned.

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

According to the Division of Historical Resource's Florida Master Site File, there are currently two historical resources located within or intersecting the boundary of the Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project.

The Williamson Canal System (OB00290) and Okeechobee Railroad Grade (OB00289) are both contained within the project boundary, reflecting the long-time use of this property and its importance in the development of Okeechobee County. As linear resources, these sites provide contributions to the property as a broader cultural landscape worthy of conservation. To date, only a portion of this property has been professionally surveyed for archaeological and/or historical sites.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS:

During the Field Review of the Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project, staff observed both currently recorded sites in good condition. There is a high potential for numerous unrecorded sites to exist on the Williamson Cattle Company property. Should any artifacts or other cultural resources be discovered on the project in the future, DHR recommends leaving them in place and contacting DHR's Public Lands Archaeology Program for further evaluation.

GOAL G:

INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF FORESTLAND AVAILABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Measure G1:

The number of acres acquired that are available for sustainable forest management.

The FFME reports approximately 6,049 acres (82% of site) could be available for sustainable forest management, primarily in Priority 5 (6,036 acres), with the remainder in Priority 3 (14 acres). Prioritization is based on 4 criteria set by the Florida Forest Service: whether trees are natural or planted, size of tract, distance to market, and hydrology. Priority 5 areas are considered "potential" pinelands; agricultural areas that could be restored to pineland.

Measure G2:

The number of acres of state owned forestland managed for economic return in accordance with current best management practices.

This project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and the landowner is not interested in silviculture. No timbering has occurred within the project since the 1980's.

Measure G4:

The percentage and number of acres identified for restoration actually restored by reforestation.

This project is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition and the landowner is not interested in reforestation onsite, cattle and citrus are the focus. The areas of higher elevations would benefit from a prescribed fire regime to shelter and feed wildlife, as understory is overgrown.

FLORIDA FOREVER CRITERIA

The proposed project meets the following Florida Forever criteria (§ 259.105, F.S.)

- The project meets multiple goals.
- The project is part of an ongoing governmental effort to restore, protect, or develop land areas or water resources.
- The project contributes to the solution of water resource problems on a regional basis.
- The project may be acquired, in whole or in part, using alternatives to fee simple

The Acquisition and Restoration Council shall give increased priority to:

- Projects that can be acquired in less than fee ownership, such as a permanent conservation easement

MANAGEMENT

If acquired as a perpetual conservation easement, primary management responsibility would remain with the landowner. Periodic monitoring of the site's management would occur to confirm continued compliance with the conditions of the easement. Monitoring would be coordinated by the Department of Environmental Protection, Division of State Lands, Office of Environmental Services.

FUNDING SOURCES

Florida Forever. CERP is implemented through a federal-state partnership that includes a 50/50 cost share agreement. Acquisition of this property could increase the state's contribution to CERP and therefore require the federal government to match that spending on other Everglades restoration projects.

OWNERSHIP PATTERN AND ACQUISITION PLANNING

Title and Legal Access, Jurisdictional and Sovereignty Lands, Legal Issues

Record of title, a designation of jurisdictional and sovereignty lands and any other legal Issues will be determined at the time of acquisition and are not known at this time.

Known Encumbrances (easement, long-term leases, restrictive covenants, etc.)

The easements and encumbrances of record would be determined during the appraisal mapping. A current title insurance commitment would be obtained, or the owner's title insurance policy would be reviewed if the policy is available. The easements and encumbrances would be depicted or noted on the appraisal map.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service holds and monitors three permanent Wetlands Reserve Program easements on the property

Description and location of hazardous waste sites, dumps, borrow pits

There are no apparent contamination sites within the project based on the application form.

Estimated Cost of Appraisal and Mapping

DEP Bureau of Appraisal estimates \$10,000 to \$20,000 in appraisal fees.

Acquisition Phases

Subject to funding, the Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever project will be phased based upon price.

GOVERNMENT PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT

The subject property is approximately 7,419 acres located in unincorporated Okeechobee just over five miles north of Lake Okeechobee and about ten miles east of the Kissimmee River in the Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough watersheds.

Its western boundary fronts Taylor Creek, a ditched waterway, and separates the property from Taylor Creek/Nubbin Slough Conservation area and Taylor Creek Stormwater Treatment Area (STA). Bordering the east side of the property are South Florida Water Management District conservation easements and several Wetlands Reserve Easements. Outside of the cluster of conservation land, there are no other managed areas within two miles. Relatively little managed land exists along Taylor Creek; the proposal offers an opportunity to protect about two miles of creek frontage, as well as ensuring buffers for existing wetland easements that protect water quality in the creek and Lake Okeechobee.

Contribution to Recreation and Open Space Needs

The proposal has moderate potential for contributing to recreation and open space needs due to the sheer size and location of the property. According to the application, the largest land use in Okeechobee County is cattle ranching; the protection of working lands is critical to building a functional ecological corridor between conservation lands. Ranches support plant communities that sustain native wildlife as well as being able to create much-needed water storage in an over-drained watershed. Virtually any land use change would decrease storage, water quality and ecological function.

The project is within the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) study area. The CERP is an interagency plan designed to restore, preserve, and protect the south Florida ecosystem while providing for other water-related needs of the region, including water supply and flood protection. The conservation and management of natural habitat in this area improves water quality, holds water to reduce flooding, increases protected habitat for imperiled species that inhabit the Everglades, and secures a regionwide system of corridors for those species so they might continue to occur in, or naturally expand back into, their historic range.

Potential for Losing Significant Natural Attributes or Recreational Open Spaces

Moderate Potential: The potential for losing significant natural attributes located on the property due to urban development is moderate as large rural residential communities are becoming increasingly common.

Potential for Being Subdivided

Moderate Potential: The future land use designation is Agriculture, which allows for a limited amount of residential development. The application states that known threats to the property

are those associated with agricultural intensification. As is common in the Lower Kissimmee Basin, rural Florida land prices are increasing, and many agricultural operators are pressured to maximize the per acre income of their ranches. One frequently used method to maximize income per acre is to plant crops. A locally common example of this is sod cultivation, which has occurred on limited areas of the property and is common on the adjacent properties.

Additionally, this property is in an area with increased urban development pressures from the rapidly expanding South Florida coastal cities to its east. Residential development of this area is a highly likely future scenario as large rural residential communities are increasingly common in Okeechobee County and the many hammocks are attractive to developers.

Zoning and Densities within the Project Boundaries

The subject property is zoned as Agriculture.

Existing Land Uses and Future Land Use Designations

Existing Land Uses: The subject property is classified with the following land use/land cover with a variety of natural communities: pasture-improved (4,766 acres); agriculture (865 acres); mesic hammock (678 acres); pasture-semi-improved (353 acres); basin swamp (241 acres); depression marsh (155 acres); mesic flatwoods (77 acres); scrub (77 acres); artificial pond (48 acres); successional hydric forest (38 acres); scrubby flatwoods (30 acres); developed (27 acres); canal/ditch (24 acres); roads (23 acres); successional hardwood forest (9 acres); basin marsh (7 acres); and dome swamp (3 acres).

Future Land Uses: The subject property is designated as "Agriculture" on the Okeechobee County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM). Based on the Okeechobee County future land use designation, Agriculture (one dwelling unit per ten acres), the subject property has a residential development potential of 741 dwelling units.

Development Potential

Based on the Okeechobee County Comprehensive Plan future land use designation, Agriculture (one dwelling unit per ten acres), the subject property has a residential development potential of 741 dwelling units (see map B). In accordance with Policy LI.10 of the Future Land Use Element of the Okeechobee County Comprehensive Plan: The primary functions of this classification are to protect agricultural land and to identify land that is not needed to serve projected growth. Such areas, having minimal road access and no public sewer or water service, are intended to be held in reserve for future needs. This classification includes those areas which are, and will continue to be, used primarily for agricultural pursuits, as well as agricultural processing activities.

Transportation Planning Issues

This project site is located within Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District 1. The site is bisected by US Highway 441, a designated evacuation route. There are numerous resurfacing and roadway improvements planned in FDOT's work program, though none have been identified as potentially interfering with the project site. The site is within 2 miles of three Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) corridors: US 441/SR 15/ US441, State Road 70, and US441/SR 15/ Parrot Avenue. While FDOT finds no adverse impact to this proposed project, there should be coordination with the appropriate FDOT District staff during the acquisition

process to ensure that issues related to the transportation system and partnering opportunities are addressed and incorporated into the management plan as appropriate.

Ongoing Governmental Efforts

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Jacksonville District, in partnership with the SFWMD, prepared the Third Revised Draft Integrated Project Implementation Report (PIR) and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the federal and non-federal interest in implementing the LOWRP, a component of the CERP that achieves restoration in the heart of the Everglades ecosystem. CERP was approved as a framework for restoring the south Florida ecosystem while providing for other water-related needs of the region in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. The LOWRP Third Revised Draft PIR and Supplemental EIS presents a description of existing and expected future conditions in the south Florida Everglades ecosystem, formulation, and evaluation of plans considered to address ecosystem restoration needs in the region, analysis of environmental effects of the Recommended Plan, project costs, and implementation issues.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Staff in DEP's Division of State Lands and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory determined the final project recommendations. The Office of Environmental Services was responsible for the overall coordination of this report, with contributions from the following:

- Division of Historical Resources – Brandon Ackerman, Jason O'Donoghue
- Florida Forest Service – Cat Ingram, Calin Ionita
- Department of Economic Opportunity – Barbara Powell
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission – Susie Nuttall, Jeanette Parker
- Florida Natural Areas Inventory – Geoffrey Parks, Geena Davis, Nathan Pasco
- DEP Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration – Ken Weaver
- Florida Department of Transportation – Ben Naselius
- South Florida Water Management District – Justin Nolte

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Final FF measures table: Report requirement 259.105 (15)d, prepared by Florida Natural Areas Inventory

Williamson Cattle Company: Florida Forever Measure Evaluation 20230224

GIS ACRES = 7,420

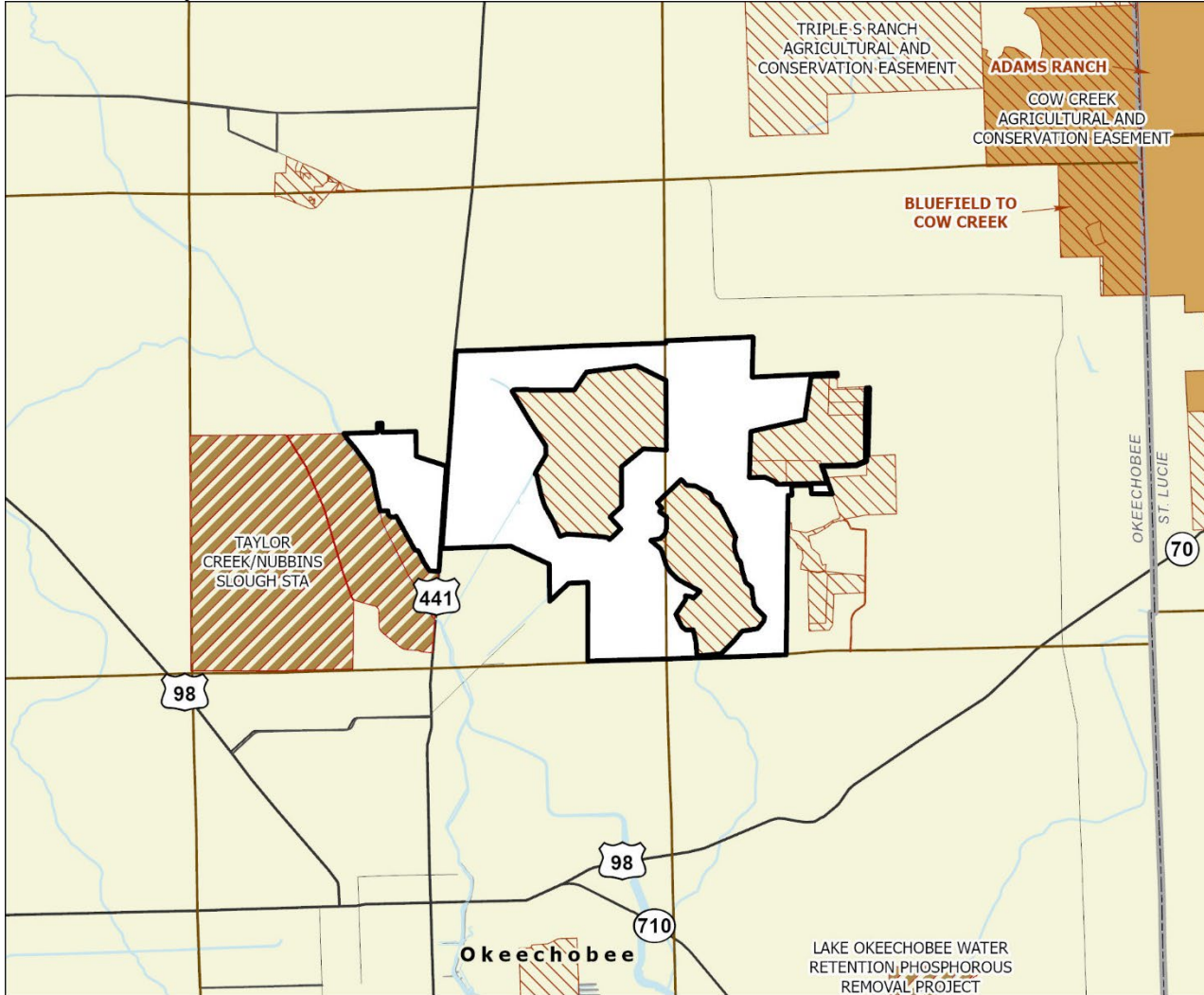
| MEASURES | Resource Acres ^a | % of project |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|
| B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas | | |
| Priority 1 | 1,832 | 25% |
| Priority 2 | 2,703 | 36% |
| Priority 3 | 1,616 | 22% |
| Priority 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 5 | 491 | 7% |
| Total Acres | 6,643 | 90% |
| B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 43 | 1% |
| Priority 4 | 1,364 | 18% |
| Priority 5 | 3,075 | 41% |
| Priority 6 | 2,344 | 32% |
| Total Acres | 6,827 | 92% |
| B3: Ecological Greenways | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 2,833 | 38% |
| Priority 3 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 5 | 3,486 | 47% |
| Total Acres | 6,320 | 85% |
| B4: Under-represented Natural Communities | | |
| Upland Glade (G1) | 0 | 0% |
| Pine Rockland (G1) | 0 | 0% |
| Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2) | 107 | 1% |
| 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) | 170 | 2% |
| Upland Hardwood Forest (G5) | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 277 | 4% |
| B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species | | |
| G1 | 0 | |
| G2 | 1 | |
| G3 | 0 | |
| G4 | 1 | |
| G5 | 2 | |
| Total | 4 | |
| C4: Natural Floodplain Function | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 109 | 1% |
| Priority 4 | 439 | 6% |
| Priority 5 | 1,476 | 20% |
| Priority 6 | 1,462 | 20% |
| Total Acres | 3,486 | 47% |

| MEASURES (continued) | Resource Acres ^a | % of project |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|
| C5: Surface Water Protection | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 393 | 5% |
| Priority 3 | 607 | 8% |
| Priority 4 | 2,492 | 34% |
| Priority 5 | 2,458 | 33% |
| Priority 6 | 1,396 | 19% |
| Priority 7 | 0 | 0% |
| Total Acres | 7,347 | 99% |
| 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 | 17 | < 1% |
| Priority 4 | 191 | 3% |
| Priority 5 | 145 | 2% |
| Priority 6 | 48 | < 1% |
| Total Acres | 401 | 5% |
| D3: Aquifer Recharge | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 447 | 6% |
| Priority 4 | 1,716 | 23% |
| Priority 5 | 3,207 | 43% |
| Priority 6 | 2,042 | 28% |
| Total Acres | 7,412 | 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) | | |
| | 0 sites | |
| G1: Sustainable Forestry | | |
| Priority 1 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 3 | 14 | < 1% |
| Priority 4 | 0 | 0% |
| Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands | 6,036 | 81% |
| Total Acres | 6,049 | 82% |
| G3: Forestland for Recharge | | |
| | 0 | 0% |

^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.

Appendix B:

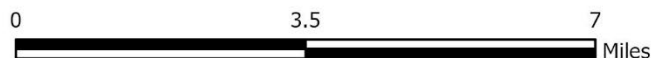
Final FF proposal boundary maps: Report requirement 259.105 (15)k, prepared by Florida Natural Areas Inventory.



WILLIAMSON CATTLE COMPANY FLORIDA FOREVER PROPOSAL

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY

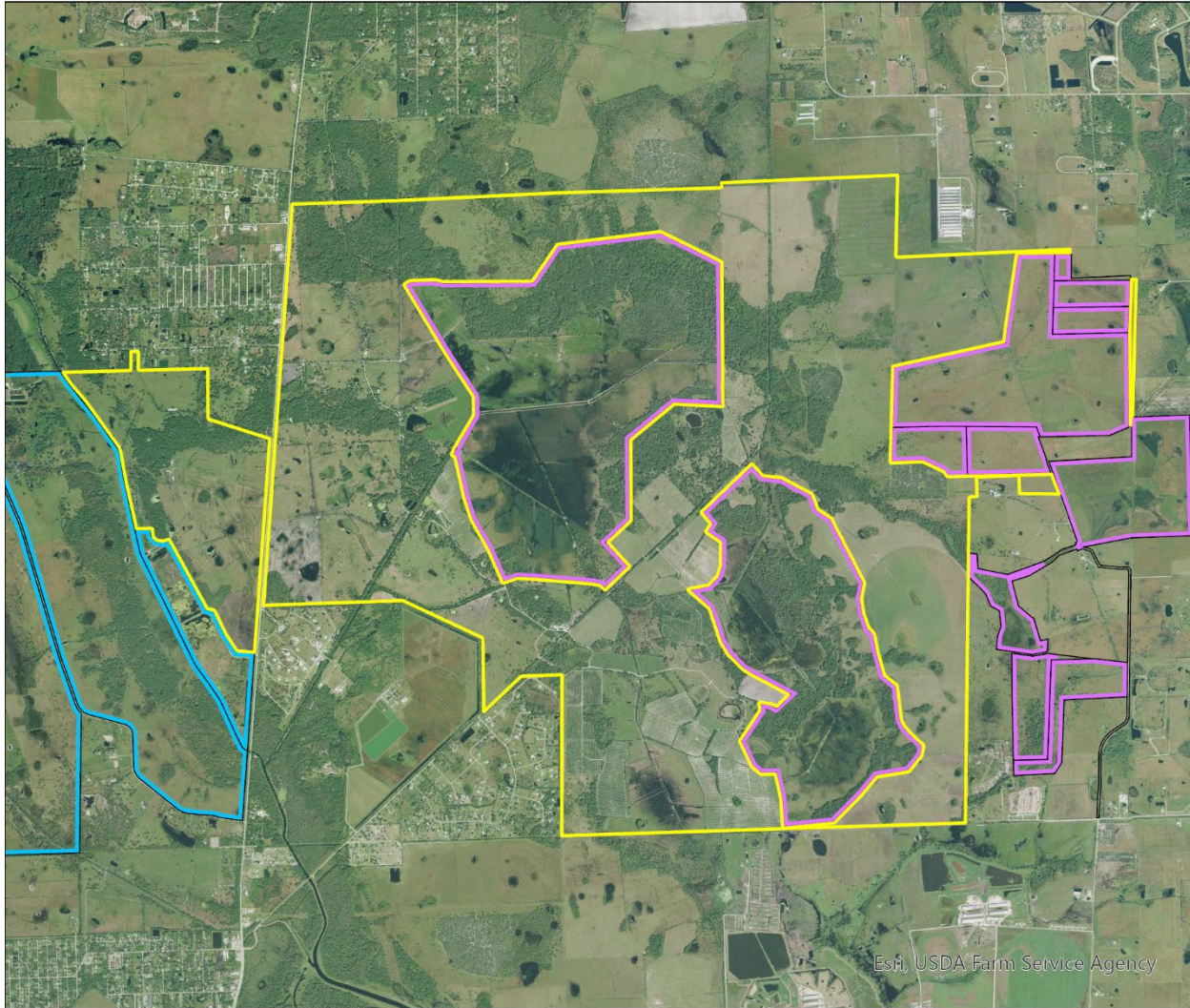
- Florida Forever Proposal
- Florida Forever BOT Projects
- State Owned Lands
- Other Conservation Lands
- State Aquatic Preserve



MAP BY FL NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY FEBRUARY 2023

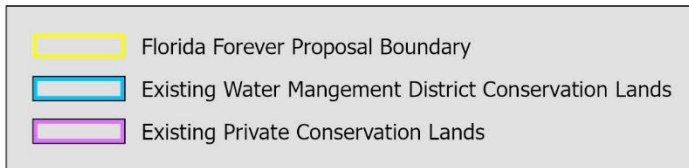
Williamson Cattle Company Florida Forever Proposal

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSAL BOUNDARY AS OF FEBRUARY 2023



Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, February 2023

Background: USDA NAIP Imagery Resolution = 1.0 meter



Appendix C:

PROPERTY ID #'S FOR FINAL RECOMMENDED BOUNDARY

| COUNTY | PARCEL ID | OWNER | ACRES PER TAX CARD | JUST VALUE | ASSESSED VALUE | PARCEL DESIGNATION |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Okeechobee | 1-13-36-35-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 217.40 | \$674,933.36 | \$23,441.15 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-14-36-35-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 389.47 | \$1,811,018.08 | \$65,180.71 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-15-36-35-0A00-00001-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 454.85 | \$3,354,252.00 | \$526,767.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-16-36-36-0A00-00006-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 388.22 | \$1,292,819.43 | \$94,925.87 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-16-36-36-0A00-00006-A000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 17.83 | \$192,564.00 | \$4,636.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-17-36-36-0A00-00004-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 17.51 | \$123,632.00 | \$4,456.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-18-36-36-0A00-00001-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 641.00 | \$4,231,148.00 | \$125,291.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-19-36-36-0A00-00001-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 692.80 | \$4,139,109.00 | \$135,610.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-21-36-35-0A00-00001-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 753.97 | \$5,558,647.00 | \$677,061.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-22-36-35-0A00-00001-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 474.27 | \$3,557,057.00 | \$575,685.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-22-36-35-0A00-00002-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 22.81 | \$457,094.00 | \$233,991.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-22-36-35-0A00-00004-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 1.00 | \$291,534.00 | \$291,534.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-23-36-35-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 265.21 | \$1,202,771.96 | \$342,743.48 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-24-36-35-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 228.43 | \$769,733.98 | \$65,968.22 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-25-36-35-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 517.51 | \$2,251,125.08 | \$382,542.20 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-26-36-35-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 410.87 | \$2,452,176.77 | \$290,936.65 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-27-36-35-0A00-00001-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 267.03 | \$2,087,176.00 | \$57,987.00 | Essential |

| COUNTY | PARCEL ID | OWNER | ACRES PER TAX CARD | JUST VALUE | ASSESSED VALUE | PARCEL DESIGNATION |
|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Okeechobee | 1-29-36-36-0A00-00002-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 320.00 | \$2,306,877.00 | \$68,875.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-30-36-36-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 160.34 | \$460,032.10 | \$19,966.63 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-31-36-36-0A00-00001-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 243.37 | \$738,281.32 | \$66,202.04 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-32-36-36-0A00-00002-0000* | Williamson Cattle Company | 271.33 | \$1,705,694.78 | \$60,819.67 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-35-36-35-0A00-00002-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 17.52 | \$176,936.00 | \$6,937.00 | Essential |
| Okeechobee | 1-36-36-35-0A00-00001-0000 | Williamson Cattle Company | 646.72 | \$3,098,520.00 | \$368,492.00 | Essential |
| | | | 7419.46 | \$42,933,132.88 | \$4,490,048.60 | |

*Partial parcel with prorated values.

Appendix D:**Imperiled Species FNAI Ranking Definitions**

FNAI
Definitions of imperiled species ranks and conservation status

Using a ranking system developed by NatureServe and the Natural Heritage Program Network, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory assigns two ranks for each element. The global rank is based on an element's worldwide status; the state rank is based on the status of the element in Florida. Element ranks are based on many factors, the most important ones being estimated number of Element Occurrences (EOs), estimated abundance (number of individuals for species; area for natural communities), geographic range, estimated number of adequately protected EOs, relative threat of destruction, and ecological fragility.

FNAI GLOBAL ELEMENT RANK

- G1** = Critically imperiled globally because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences or less than 1000 individuals) or because of extreme vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- G2** = Imperiled globally because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences or less than 3000 individuals) or because of vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- G3** = Either very rare and local throughout its range (21-100 occurrences or less than 10,000 individuals) or found locally in a restricted range or vulnerable to extinction from other factors.
- G4** = Apparently secure globally (may be rare in parts of range).
- G5** = Demonstrably secure globally.
- GH** = Of historical occurrence throughout its range, may be rediscovered (e.g., ivory-billed woodpecker).
- GX** = Believed to be extinct throughout range.
- GXC** = Extirpated from the wild but still known from captivity or cultivation.
- G#?** = Tentative rank (e.g., G2?).
- G#G#** = Range of rank; insufficient data to assign specific global rank (e.g., G2G3).
- G#T#** = Rank of a taxonomic subgroup such as a subspecies or variety; the G portion of the rank refers to the entire species and the T portion refers to the specific subgroup; numbers have same definition as above (e.g., G3T1).
- G#Q** = Rank of questionable species - ranked as species but questionable whether it is species or subspecies; numbers have same definition as above (e.g., G2Q).
- G#T#Q** = Same as above, but validity as subspecies or variety is questioned.
- GU** = Unrankable; due to a lack of information no rank or range can be assigned (e.g., GUT2).
- GNA** = Ranking is not applicable because the element is not a suitable target for conservation (e.g. a hybrid species).
- GNR** = Element not yet ranked (temporary).
- GNRTNR** = Neither the element nor the taxonomic subgroup has yet been ranked.

FNAI STATE ELEMENT RANK

- S1** = Critically imperiled in Florida because of extreme rarity (5 or fewer occurrences or less than 1000 individuals) or because of extreme vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- S2** = Imperiled in Florida because of rarity (6 to 20 occurrences or less than 3000 individuals) or because of vulnerability to extinction due to some natural or man-made factor.
- S3** = Either very rare and local in Florida (21-100 occurrences or less than 10,000 individuals) or found locally in a restricted range or vulnerable to extinction from other factors.
- S4** = Apparently secure in Florida (may be rare in parts of range).
- S5** = Demonstrably secure in Florida.
- SH** = Of historical occurrence in Florida, possibly extirpated, but may be rediscovered (e.g., ivory-billed woodpecker).
- SX** = Believed to be extirpated throughout Florida.
- SU** = Unrankable; due to a lack of information no rank or range can be assigned.
- SNA** = State ranking is not applicable because the element is not a suitable target for conservation (e.g. a hybrid species).
- SNR** = Element not yet ranked (temporary).

FEDERAL LEGAL STATUS

Legal status information provided by FNAI for information only. For official definitions and lists of protected species, consult the relevant federal agency.

Definitions derived from U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973, Sec. 3. Note that the federal status given by FNAI refers only to Florida

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FNAI
Definitions of imperiled species ranks and conservation status

populations and that federal status may differ elsewhere.

C = Candidate species for which federal listing agencies have sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support proposing to list the species as Endangered or Threatened.
E = Endangered: species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
E, T = Species currently listed endangered in a portion of its range but only listed as threatened in other areas
E, PDL = Species currently listed endangered but has been proposed for delisting.
E, PT = Species currently listed endangered but has been proposed for listing as threatened.
E, XN = Species currently listed endangered but tracked population is a non-essential experimental population.
T = Threatened: species likely to become Endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
PE = Species proposed for listing as endangered
PS = Partial status: some but not all of the species' infraspecific taxa have federal
PT = Species proposed for listing as threatened
SAT = Treated as threatened due to similarity of appearance to a species which is federally listed such that enforcement personnel have difficulty in attempting to differentiate between the listed and unlisted species.
SC = Not currently listed, but considered a "species of concern" to USFWS.

STATE LEGAL STATUS

Provided by FNAI for information only. For official definitions and lists of protected species, consult the relevant state agency.

Animals: Definitions derived from "Florida's Endangered Species and Species of Special Concern, Official Lists" published by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 1 August 1997, and subsequent updates.

C = Candidate for listing at the Federal level by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
FE = Listed as Endangered Species at the Federal level by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
FT = Listed as Threatened Species at the Federal level by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
FXN = Federal listed as an experimental population in Florida
FT(S/A) = Federal Threatened due to similarity of appearance
ST = State population listed as Threatened by the FFWCC. Defined as a species, subspecies, or isolated population which is acutely vulnerable to environmental alteration, declining in number at a rapid rate, or whose range or habitat is decreasing in area at a rapid rate and as a consequence is destined or very likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future.
SSC = Listed as Species of Special Concern by the FFWCC. Defined as a population which warrants special protection, recognition, or consideration because it has an inherent significant vulnerability to habitat modification, environmental alteration, human disturbance, or substantial human exploitation which, in the foreseeable future, may result in its becoming a threatened species. (SSC* for *Pandion haliaetus* (Osprey) indicates that this status applies in Monroe county only.)
N = Not currently listed, nor currently being considered for listing.

Plants: Definitions derived from Sections 581.011 and 581.185(2), Florida Statutes, and the Preservation of Native Flora of Florida Act, 5B-40.001. FNAI does not track all state-regulated plant species; for a complete list of state-regulated plant species, call Florida Division of Plant Industry, 352-372-3505 or see: <<http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/>>.

E = Endangered: species of plants native to Florida that are in imminent danger of extinction within the state, the survival of which is unlikely if the causes of a decline in the number of plants continue; includes all species determined to be endangered or threatened pursuant to the U.S. Endangered Species Act.
T = Threatened: species native to the state that are in rapid decline in the number of plants within the state, but which have not so decreased in number as to cause them to be Endangered.
N = Not currently listed, nor currently being considered for listing.

Appendix E:

Site Visit Photos



Improved pasture



Mostly intact Basin Marsh within Mesic Flatwoods on western side of property



Mesic Hammock



A network of control structures and ditching occur throughout the property



Southern fox squirrel



Scrubby flatwoods



Mesic flatwoods with native wiregrass groundcover



NRCS Wetland Reserve Easement and associated control structures