

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed

Lee and Collier Counties

Partnerships

Purpose for State Acquisition

The large, interconnected swamps of southwest Florida must be preserved if such wildlife as the Florida panther and black bear are to survive. The Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) project will conserve connections between three conservation areas and will provide critical protection for rare wildlife; protect the flow of water feeding the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand, and other areas. Public opportunities will be provided to learn about and enjoy these natural resources as southwest Florida develops rapidly around them.

Manager

South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

General Description

The project, which mostly consists of excellent examples of cypress swamps and marshes, will connect the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve with the National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, thereby securing important habitat for the Florida panther and Florida black bear. These large expanses of wetlands are believed to be critical to the survival of these critically imperiled species. The project supports at least two species of rare and endangered orchids, and includes an unusual stand of dwarf bald cypress. No

archaeological sites are recorded from the project. Upland areas are vulnerable to agricultural and residential development.

Public Use

This project is designated as a wildlife and environmental area, with such uses as hiking, camping and environmental education.

Acquisition Planning

On 2/7/1990, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council (LAAC) added the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) project to the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Priority list. This acquisition, sponsored by the SFWMD, consisted of approximately 18,205 acres, 73 landowners, and a taxable value of \$23,704,330. The entire project in both Lee and Collier counties contains approximately 49,810 acres, however, the initial focus of land acquisition is on the Camp Keis Strand Corridor (18,205 acres). The Collier family is the largest landowner in the Strand. If fee-simple acquisition is not negotiable, then conservation easements or other less-than-fee acquisition techniques will be pursued.

On 11/20/1992, LAAC amended the project design to allow matching funds anywhere within the project for "new" acquisitions (those acquired after 11/20/92) by its partners Lee County and the SFWMD.

On 9/20/1993, the LAAC approved a 3,182-acre

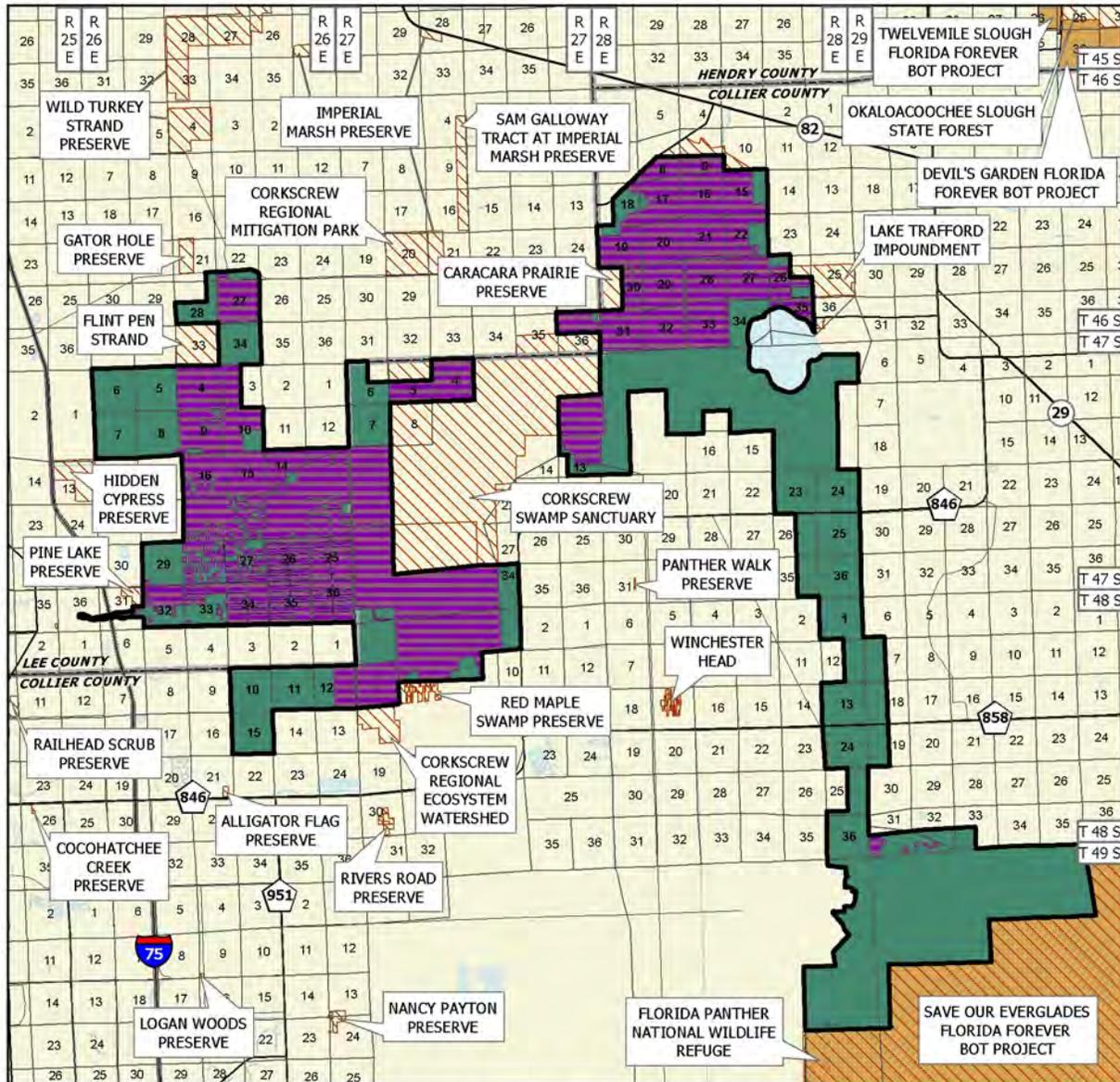
Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed FNAI Elements	
Florida Panther	G5T1/S1
Florida Black Bear	G5T2/S2
Swallow-tailed Kite	G5/S2
Wood Stork	G4/S2
Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake	G4/S3
Bald Eagle	G5/S3
Snowy Egret	G5/S3
Yellow-crowned Night-heron	G5/S3
Little Blue Heron	G5/S4
Tricolored Heron	G5/S4
Great Egret	G5/S4

11 rare species are associated with the project

Placed on List	1991
Project Area (GIS Acres)	69,349
Acres Acquired (GIS)	38,817*
at a Cost of	\$94,659,111*
Acres Remaining (GIS)	38,532
with Estimated (Tax Assessed) Value of	\$22,725,813

*includes acreage acquired and funds spent by the State of Florida in conjunction with the SFWMD, Lee County, Collier County, and the United States government.

Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed



LEE AND COLLIER COUNTIES

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  Other Conservation Lands



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addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the SFWMD, consisted of 4 tracts and multiple landowners, and a taxable value of \$8,636,331. The original amendment was for 4,022 acres, however 840 acres of 1 tract were already in the current boundary.

On 10/30/1995, the LAAC approved a 612-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the SFWMD and had a taxable value of \$891,403. The original amendment was for 1,132 acres, however 520 acres were already in the current boundary.

On 12/5/1996, the LAAC approved a 3,040-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the SFWMD, consisted of 2 sites, and a taxable value of \$9,029,712. The original amendment was for 4 sites and 4,040 acres, however only sites 3 (excluding the south half of section 35) and 4 were approved.

On 12/9/1999, the Land Acquisition Management Advisory Council (LAMAC) approved a 2,560-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the SFWMD and the CREW Trust, consisted of 353 parcels, 260 landowners, and a taxable value of \$10,500,000. The parcels were designated as essential.

On 6/6/2002, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) approved a 424-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the SFWMD, consisted of 147 parcels and multiple landowners, and a taxable value of \$2,570,240.

In 2/2009 Collier County purchased 2,499 acres known as Pepper Ranch for \$32,525,080; in 10/2009 Lee County purchased approximately 15 acres/\$136,500 from their 20/20 program; and SFWMD donated 10 acres to FWC in same month. Following acres were purchased by SFWMD: 6/2009 and 11/2009 (58 GIS ac./\$661,250); 3 easement tracts (15) were donated by Bonita Springs Utility Co.; 11/2010 (191 ac./\$3,828,890); 12/210 (5 ac./\$75,000).

Coordination

Acquisition partners are SFWMD, Lee and Collier Counties. Both The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) have been intermediaries in the acquisition of some tracts. Resolutions in support of this project include a pledge from Lee County for \$1.5 million.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the CREW project are to conserve and protect significant habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; and to conserve, protect, manage, or restore important ecosystems, landscapes, and forests, in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources which local or state regulatory programs cannot adequately protect.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation The project's size, natural communities, and extremely sensitive wildlife resources qualify it as a wildlife and environmental area.

Manager The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is lead Manager.

Conditions affecting intensity of management There are various intensities of management required for lands in CREW. There are low-need parcels such as virgin stands of cypress that require little or no management. Also within CREW are moderate-need tracts that need basic resource management such as prescribed burning, and high-need tracts that have been completely altered. Severely altered tracts, such as agricultural fields, must be ecologically restored.

Timetable for implementing management and provisions for security and protection of infrastructure

The initial land management plan was implemented in February 1991. Planning and operational activities are ongoing. Public use guidelines, including public access, have been established and are constantly being revised.

Revenue-generating potential No revenue is expected to be generated for at least the next two and one half years. At that time recommendations by the FWC may lead to activities such as hunting that will generate revenue through permit and license fees. No other revenue-producing practices are envisioned at this stage of the management program.

Cooperators in management activities A cooperative management agreement with the FWC was executed 9/6/1994. The project now receives regular inspections by SFWMD staff and law enforcement patrol by the FWC Reserve program. Under the agreement, the FWC will enforce all laws, rules and regulations applicable to the management of CREW. Additional lands acquired will be given the same protection.

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Management Cost Summary/SFWMD			
Category	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Source of Funds	WMLTF	WMLTF	WMLTF
Salary	\$107,238	\$117,961	\$123,859
OPS	\$35,000	\$38,500	\$38,500
Expense	\$197,250	\$216,915	\$238,606
OCO	\$0	\$28,000	\$20,000
FCO	\$0	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	\$339,448	\$401,436	\$420,965

Updated 2/28/2012