

Estero Bay

Lee County

Substantially Complete

Purpose for State Acquisition

Estero Bay is one of the most productive estuaries in the state. Its mangroves shelter important nesting colonies of water birds, and feed and protect many aquatic animals. These animals, in turn, are the foundation of a commercial and sport fishery. Important archaeological remains of the Calusa Indians dot the area. The Estero Bay project will protect the bay's water quality, its native plants and animals, its archaeological sites, and will provide recreational opportunities to the people of the rapidly growing Fort Myers area.

Manager

Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

General Description

Much of the Estero Bay project area is composed of wetlands fronting Estero Bay (mangrove swamp, salt marsh, and salt flats). These communities provide nutrients to the bay, contributing substantially to its biological productivity. The bay area supports a diversity of wildlife, including the federally threatened bald eagle. The wetlands in a natural condition help maintain high water quality in the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve. Several archaeological sites attributed to the Calusa Indians and their prehistoric ancestors are known

from the project area. The project is threatened by the rapid residential development in the area.

Public Use

This project is designated as a buffer preserve to the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve and can provide opportunities for fishing, hiking, nature appreciation, and primitive camping.

Acquisition Planning

Phase I: Windsor/Steven's tract (acquired) and the Estero Bay ownership (acquired). Phase II: developable uplands from Section 19 north. Phase III: developable uplands from Section 30 south. Phase IV: wetlands and islands. Other essential tracts more specifically identified by LAMAC in 1994 include the Chapel Ridge area and other high quality scrub areas in sections 19, 30, 31 and 5.

On 10/15/1998, the LAMAC revised the designation of the following parcels to essential: Boone, Haywood/Staffile Trust, Zemel, TNC, Rubin, Kagin, Bigelow, C. Bigelow, Cape Corp., ADP Chimney, Marsh and Chitwood, Francisco, Goldberg, and Helmerich. On 2/5/1998, and March 20, 1998, the Council added 302 acres and 1,586 acres, respectively. The Council deleted 932 acres at the March meeting.

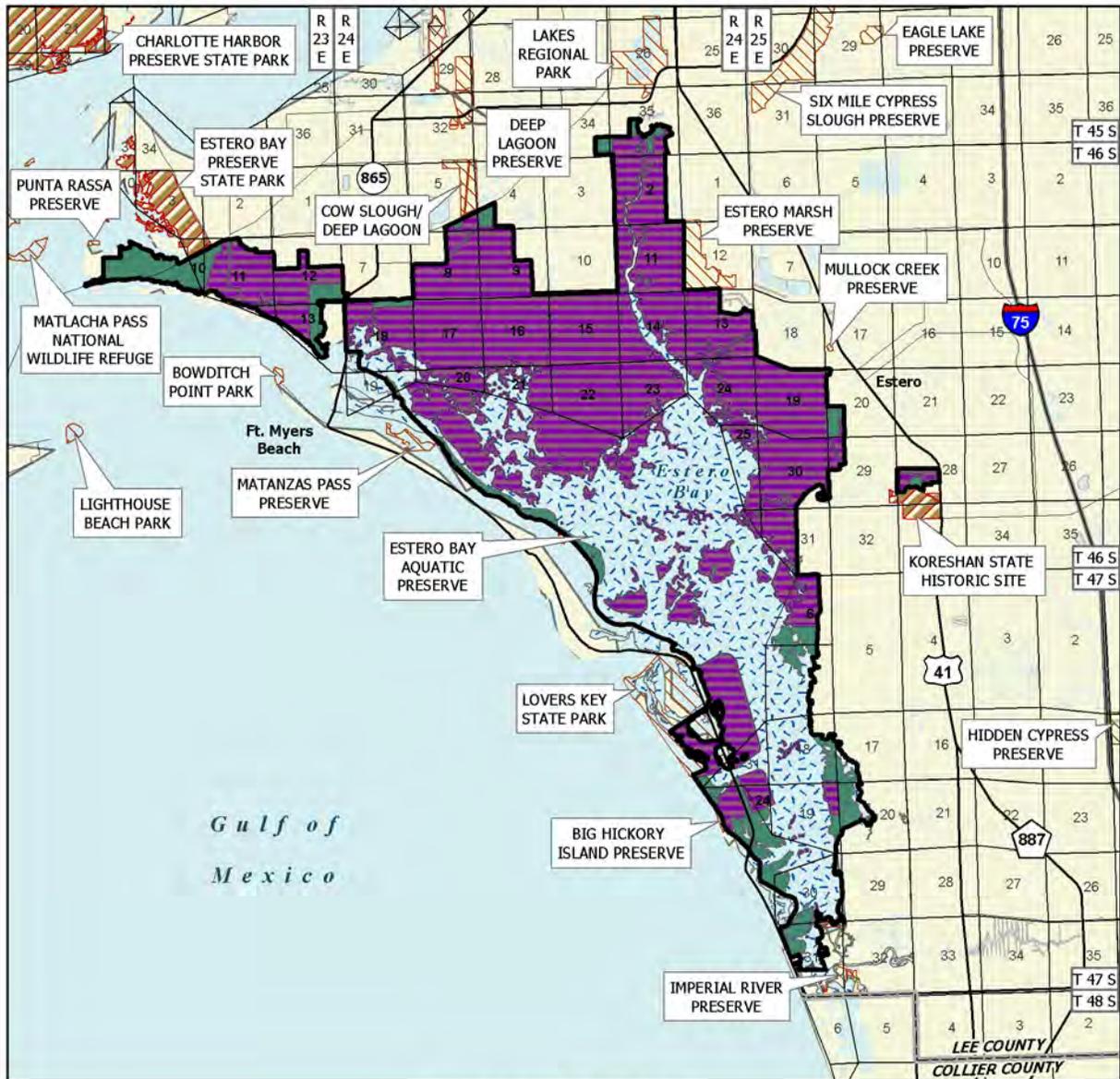
On 10/17/2000, The Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added 160 acres to the project. The additions were made to complete ownerships that were partially included.

Estero Bay FNAI Elements	
Manatee	G2/S2
Florida Black Bear	G5T2/S2
Eastern Indigo Snake	G3/S3
Gopher Tortoise	G3/S3
Bird Rookery	GNR/SNR
Sanibel Lovegrass	G5T1/S1
Giant Orchid	G2G3/S2
Spiny Hackberry	G4/S1
Iguana Hackberry	G5/S1
Red Stopper	G5/S1
Wood Stork	G4/S2
Reddish Egret	G4/S2
24 rare species are associated with the project	

Placed on List	1985
Project Area (GIS Acres)	14,267
Acres Acquired (GIS)	11,908
at a Cost of	\$54,461,790
Acres Remaining (GIS)	2,359

with Estimated (Tax Assessed) Value of \$6,943,661*
 Note: 433 acres were removed 10/2009 due to residential/commercial/infrastructure development.

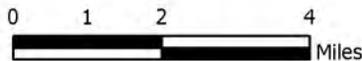
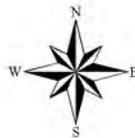
Estero Bay



ESTERO BAY

LEE COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Fee Simple)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  State Owned Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  State Aquatic Preserves



APRIL 2012

On 12/6/2001, this project was moved from the Florida Forever “B” list to the “A” list.

On 2/6/2004, the Council added a 98-acre parcel on the Estero River to the boundaries of the project. At the 8/20/2004 meeting, the Council deleted 1,312 acres north and south of the community of Estero from project.

The majority of the large tracts have been acquired. A number of smaller tracts remain to be acquired.

On 10/9/2009, ARC recommended for removal from the boundary 7 sites of 88 individual parcels containing residential/commercial structures or infrastructure, totaling 433 acres with a just tax assessed value of \$63,958,330.

On 4/21/2010, DRP purchased 36.60 acres for \$91,500 provided through a federal grant from U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. DRP to manage.

Coordination

Approximately 316 acres were acquired through donation from The Nature Conservancy in 1986. Along with TNC, the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) and USFWS are considered partners on this project.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the Estero Bay project are: to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area; 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, 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; and to preserve significant

archaeological or historical sites.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation The Estero Bay project borders the state-owned submerged lands of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve and includes swamps, marshes, and other natural communities that contribute to the productivity of the bay. These resources qualify it as a state buffer preserve.

Manager Lands acquired through this project will be included in the Estero Bay Buffer Preserve and managed by DRP. The Division of Historical Resources will participate in the management and protection of archeological and historical resources.

Conditions affecting intensity of management The project is surrounded by one of the most rapidly developing areas in the state. Development is also occurring within the project boundary. This urbanization requires immediate implementation of a patrol schedule and law enforcement presence. The control of exotic plants and animals and reduction of illegal activities, such as off-road vehicle use and poaching, will require “medium-need” initial management followed by “low-need” routine maintenance.

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

Long-range goals will be established by the management plan for this property and will provide for ecological restoration and habitat maintenance. Prescribed and natural fires will be used to maintain natural communities with particular emphasis on the requirements of listed species. The resource inventory will help identify site-specific management needs and appropriate uses for the property. Infrastructure development will be confined to already disturbed areas and will be the minimum required to allow appropriate uses identified in the management plan.

Revenue-generating potential Initially, the revenue-generating potential of the project will be limited, with indirect financial benefits accruing to the state from increased public awareness and enhanced water quality, fisheries, and public recreation. In the future, user fees may directly generate revenue.

Updated 4/12/2012