

ITEM 6:

Vote on whether to amend the Green Swamp Florida Forever Project Boundary to add 26 parcels totaling approximately $\pm$ 2,470 acres in Lake County with a tax assessed market value of \$4,773,926.

LOCATION:

Lake County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Rogers Ranch amendment proposed by Saunders Real Estate adds 26 parcels in Lake County totaling approximately $\pm$ 2,470 acres to the Green Swamp Florida Forever project. The twenty-six parcels are owned by Rogers Property Management LLC. The parcels have a combined tax assessed value of \$4,773,926 and are proposed for less-than-fee acquisition.

The property is located near the western border of Lake County, four miles northwest of Groveland; two miles north of the Green Swamp project boundary and about the same distance from the Withlacoochee State Forest. The proposed site lies north and east of Green Swamp in a region where most uplands were converted to citrus groves. The property is predominately basin marsh with improved pasture, semi-improved pasture, within a limited mosaic of hammock, flatwoods, scrub and depressional wetlands. The ranch includes existing improvements that support its ongoing agricultural use. All landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. If acquired as a conservation easement, the property would broaden the connection between conservation areas and support wildlife protection.

The proposal meets the criteria to be submitted as a boundary amendment. The parcels have a tax assessed value of less than \$5 million. The proposal area should be designated as essential.

Project History:

The Green Swamp in Lake, Pasco and Polk Counties was added to the Florida Forever Priority List in 2015. The mosaic of cypress swamps, pine forests, and pastures known as the Green Swamp is vital to the water supply of central Florida. The Green Swamp gives rise to four major river systems and is important for maintaining the flow of water from the Floridan Aquifer. By preserving the combination of land uses in this region, the Green Swamp project will protect the Floridan Aquifer and several rivers, preserve a large area for wildlife to inhabit and use as wildlife corridors, and provide areas for public recreation in the rapidly growing region between Tampa and Orlando.

The Green Swamp project includes over 269,287 acres with 153,479 acres remaining and is ranked number 10 in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives category on the 2025 Florida Forever Priority List. The tax assessed value for the remaining acres to be acquired in this project per property appraiser information (2024) is \$2,858,526,703.

FNAI Review:

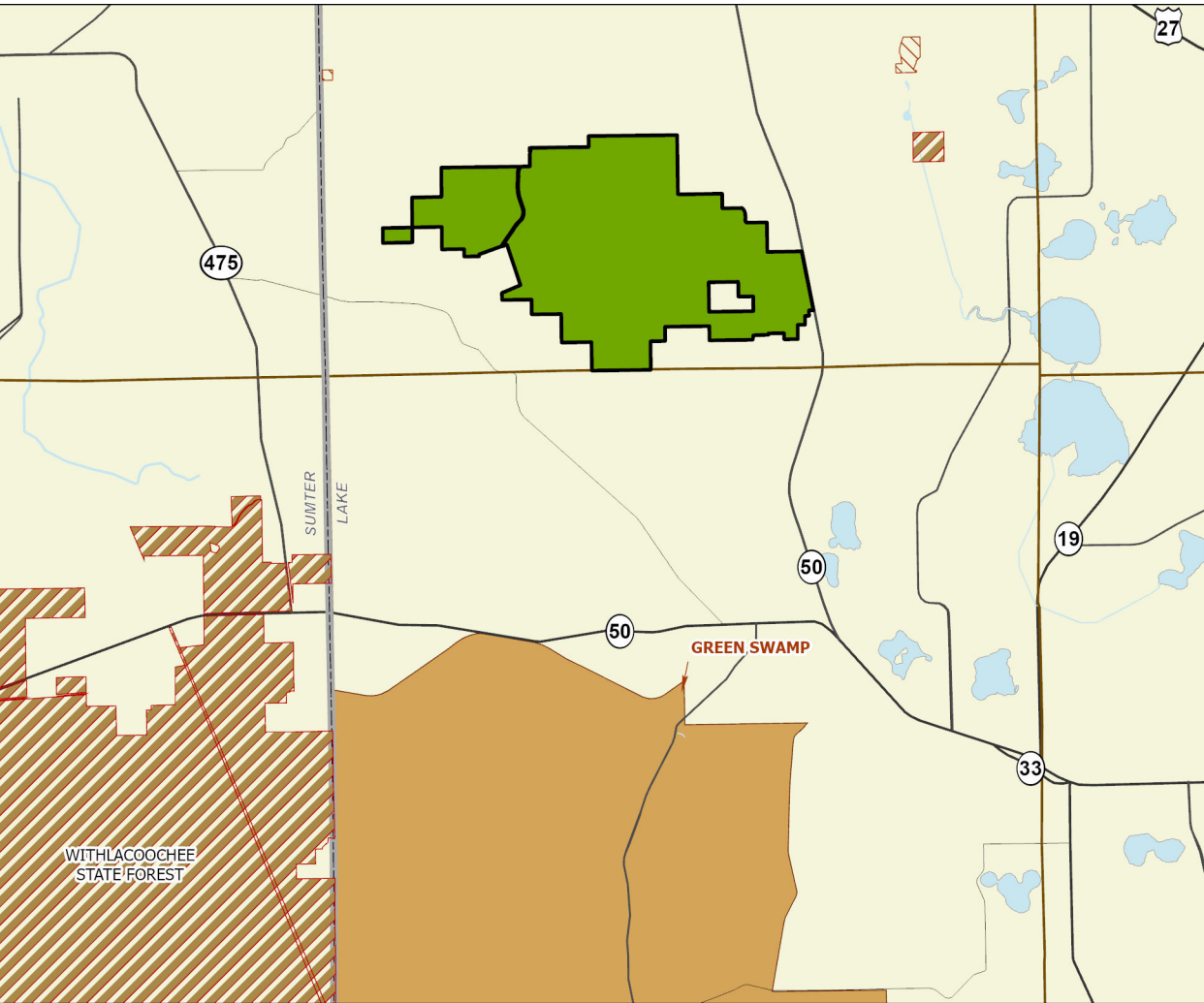
According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 98-100% of the proposal contributes to Aquifer Recharge and Surface Water Protection. More than two-thirds contribute to FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities, Natural Floodplain Function, and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas, 65% of the site contributes to Functional Wetlands.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

Project	DHR	FFS	Griner	DEP	FWC	Palmer	Peppers	Watts	Gamblin	Select
Green Swamp: Rogers Ranch										



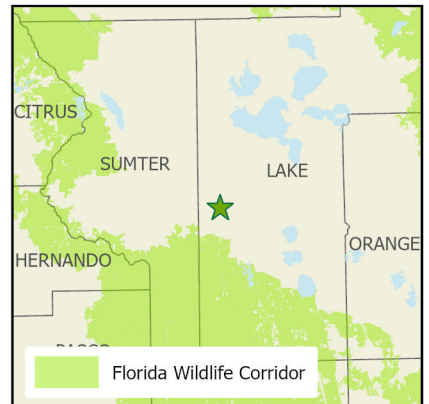
GREEN SWAMP FLORIDA FOREVER PROJECT ROGERS RANCH BOUNDARY AMENDMENT

LAKE COUNTY

- Florida Forever Proposed Addition
- Florida Forever BOT Projects
- State Owned Lands
- Other Conservation Lands

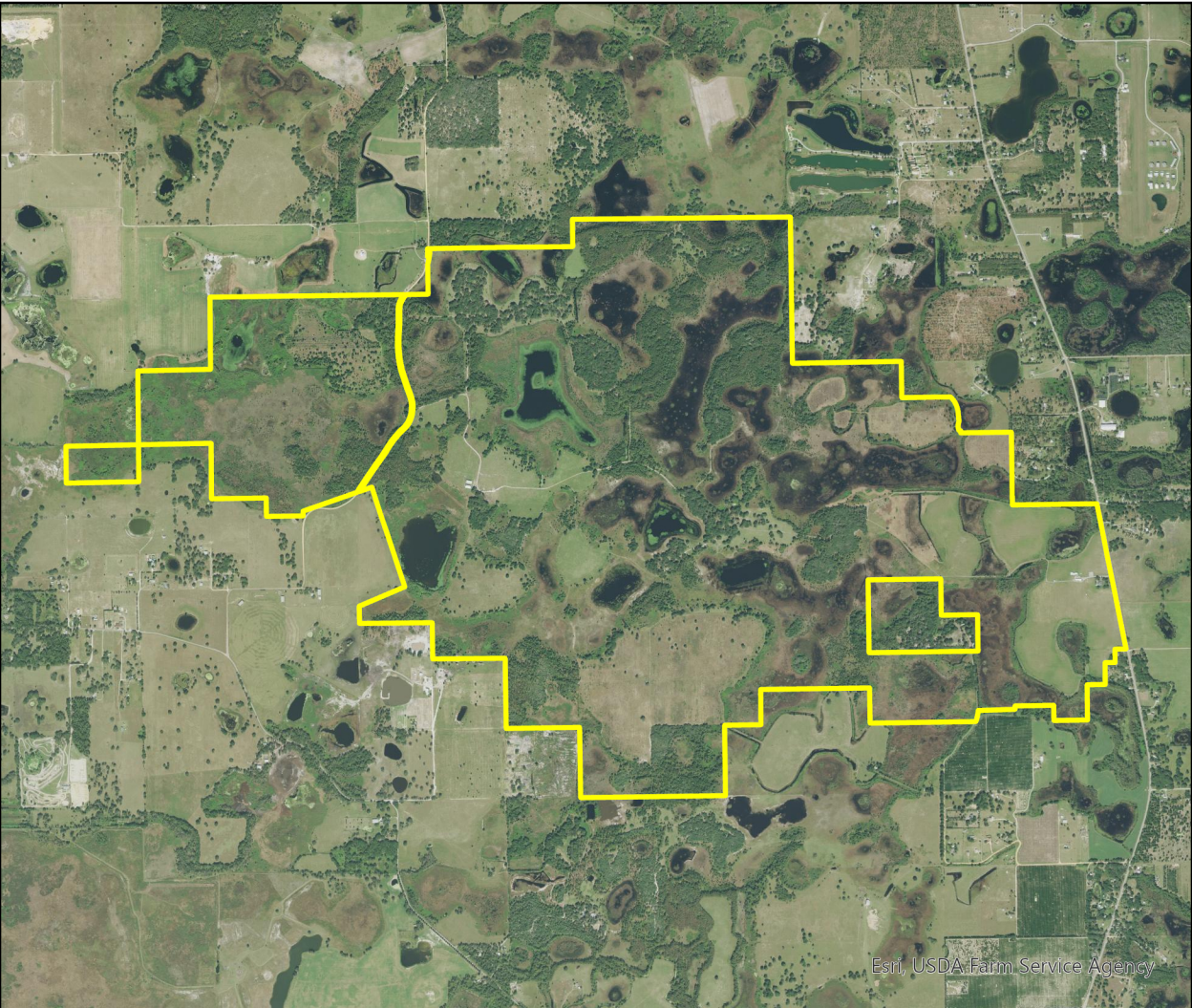


0 1.5 3
Miles



GREEN SWAMP FLORIDA FOREVER PROJECT ROGERS RANCH BOUNDARY AMENDMENT

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED ADDITION AS OF MAY 2025



Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, May 2025

Background: USA NAIP Aerial Imagery Resolution = 0.6 meter



Florida Forever Proposed Addition



Green Swamp Addition (Rogers Ranch): Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20250422

GIS ACRES = 2,470

MEASURES	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	9	< 1%
Priority 3	253	10%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	1,415	57%
Total Acres	1,677	68%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	332	13%
Priority 5	948	38%
Priority 6	929	38%
Total Acres	2,209	89%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	27	1%
Total Acres	27	1%
B4: Under-represented Natural Communities		
Upland Glade (G1)	0	0%
Pine Rockland (G1)	0	0%
Scrub and Scrubby Flatwoods (G2)	0	0%
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)	50	2%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	0	0%
Total Acres	50	2%
B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species		
G1	0	
G2	0	
G3	0	
G4	1	
G5	0	
Total	1	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	602	24%
Priority 3	1,108	45%
Priority 4	256	10%
Priority 5	2	< 1%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	1,967	80%

MEASURES (continued)	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
C5: Surface Water Protection		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	2,416	98%
Priority 7	0	0%
Total Acres	2,416	98%
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	534	22%
Priority 3	999	40%
Priority 4	75	3%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	1,608	65%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	159	6%
Priority 2	368	15%
Priority 3	698	28%
Priority 4	1,174	48%
Priority 5	69	3%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	2,469	100%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles)		
(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)		
Land Trail Priorities	0.0	
Land Trail Opportunities	3.7	
Total Miles	3.7	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)		5 sites
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	43	2%
Priority 5	7	< 1%
Total Acres	50	2%
G3: Forestland for Recharge		20 < 1%

^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.

To: Meghan Lauer, DEP/OES
From: Dale R. Jackson, Ph.D., FNAI
Date: May 12, 2025
Subject: Proposed Boundary Modification to Florida Forever BOT Project: Green Swamp – Rogers Ranch (Lake County)

The major goals of the Green Swamp Florida Forever BOT Project (GSFFBOT) are to protect the Floridan Aquifer and several rivers, preserve a large area for wildlife to inhabit and use as wildlife corridors, and provide areas for public recreation in the rapidly growing region between Tampa and Orlando. The ca. 2,470.2-acre Rogers Ranch property is proposed as an addition to the project. The property is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition.

The property is situated in southwestern Lake County just 0.5 mile east of the Sumter County line and northwest of the small towns of Mascotte and Groveland; it extends eastward to highway CR-33 (Broad Street) and lies 0.5 mile north of Tuscannoga Road. The site is mostly a single tract with an inholding (supporting a residence, agricultural buildings, and access drive) in the east and an unpaved road in the west excluded. The ranch lies 2.5 miles north of GSFFBOT - Withlacoochee River Headwaters, which is contiguous on its east with GSFFBOT - Pine Island Recharge Area. About an equivalent distance to the southwest of the proposal lies a portion of Withlacoochee State Forest. These large, adjacent tracts are separated from Rogers Ranch by a mosaic of wooded wetlands, agriculture/pasture, and rural residential development, which limits but does not totally preclude the possibility of future landscape connections.

The proposed site lies north and east of Green Swamp in a region where most uplands had been converted to citrus groves (as depicted on USGS 7.5' topographic maps) that extended almost to the edges of numerous lakes and wetlands. However, because the Rogers Ranch property was predominantly wetland, citrus was restricted to a few higher "islands." Aerial photography shows that these groves have been mostly cleared and replaced by improved pasture or other agriculture. Remote analysis combined with interpretation of aerial photographs suggests that basin marsh represents 58% (1435 acres) of the ranch, with 14% (352 acres) in improved pasture (currently supporting cattle) and 10% (256 acres) in abandoned fields/pastures or semi-improved pastures. Xeric hammock, mesic hammock, wet flatwoods, mesic flatwoods, scrub, basin swamp, and depression marsh were identified but with each representing less than 2% of the site.

The tract lies within a region in which the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission considers the Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*; G5T4/S4, N, N) to be common. The FNAI database has no other records of rare/listed species on site, although absence of other records may reflect lack of on-site field surveys, as birds such as sandhill cranes (subspecies not confirmed) and bald eagles have been observed by the landowner.

The Florida Forever Measures Evaluation (FFME) below is based on the Florida Forever Conservation Needs Assessment developed by FNAI. The data used in that analysis represent a standardized,

statewide perspective of natural resources. All or most (98–100%) of the proposal contributes to Aquifer Recharge (mostly priorities 2, 3, and 4) and Surface Water Protection (priority 6). More than two-thirds contributes to FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (89%; priorities 4, 5, and 6), Natural Floodplain Function (80%; priorities 2, 3, and 4), and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (priorities 3 and 5). 65% of the site contributes to Functional Wetlands (chiefly priorities 2 and 3).