

ITEM 8:

Vote on whether to amend the South Goethe Florida Forever Project Boundary to add ten parcels totaling approximately $\pm$ 1,305 acres in Marion County with a tax assessed market value of \$4,763,629.

LOCATION:

Marion County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Warm Springs Ranch amendment proposed by Conservation Florida adds ten parcels in Marion County totaling approximately $\pm$ 1,305 acres to the South Goethe Florida Forever project. The ten parcels are owned by Gissy Warm Springs Ranch, LLC. The parcels have a combined tax assessed value of \$4,763,629 and are proposed for less-than-fee acquisition.

Warm Springs Ranch is located approximately one mile north of the town of Dunnellon, at the southwest corner of Marion County. The proposed addition consists of two disjunct tracts, a smaller northwestern one and a larger southeastern one, 1.5 miles apart. The tracts are located on either side of the South Goethe Florida Forever project and this proposal is also contiguous to eastern end of the Bear Hammock Florida Forever project. The property is currently used for cattle and recreation. As such, most of the property is comprised of improved and semi-improved pasture, wetlands, and contains an artificial lake created by previous mining activity. The site probably once supported mesic flatwoods or sandhill and the southeastern tract, though disturbed, appears to retain a diverse groundcover. Improvements include structures that support the cattle operation, and a fishing dock and storage shed near the old mine. All landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers.

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 South Goethe project located in Levy and Marion Counties was added to the Florida Forever Priority List in 2006. The project will create a landscape corridor from Goethe State Forest to the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area (MHCCFG) along the Withlacoochee River. Acquisitions within the project will provide a significant buffer along the southern boundary of the state forest to maintain forest management practices and protect its rare sandhill habitat .

The South Goethe project includes over 11,706 acres with 11,350 acres remaining and is ranked number 19 in the Critical Natural Lands 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 \$33,395,567.

FNAI Review:

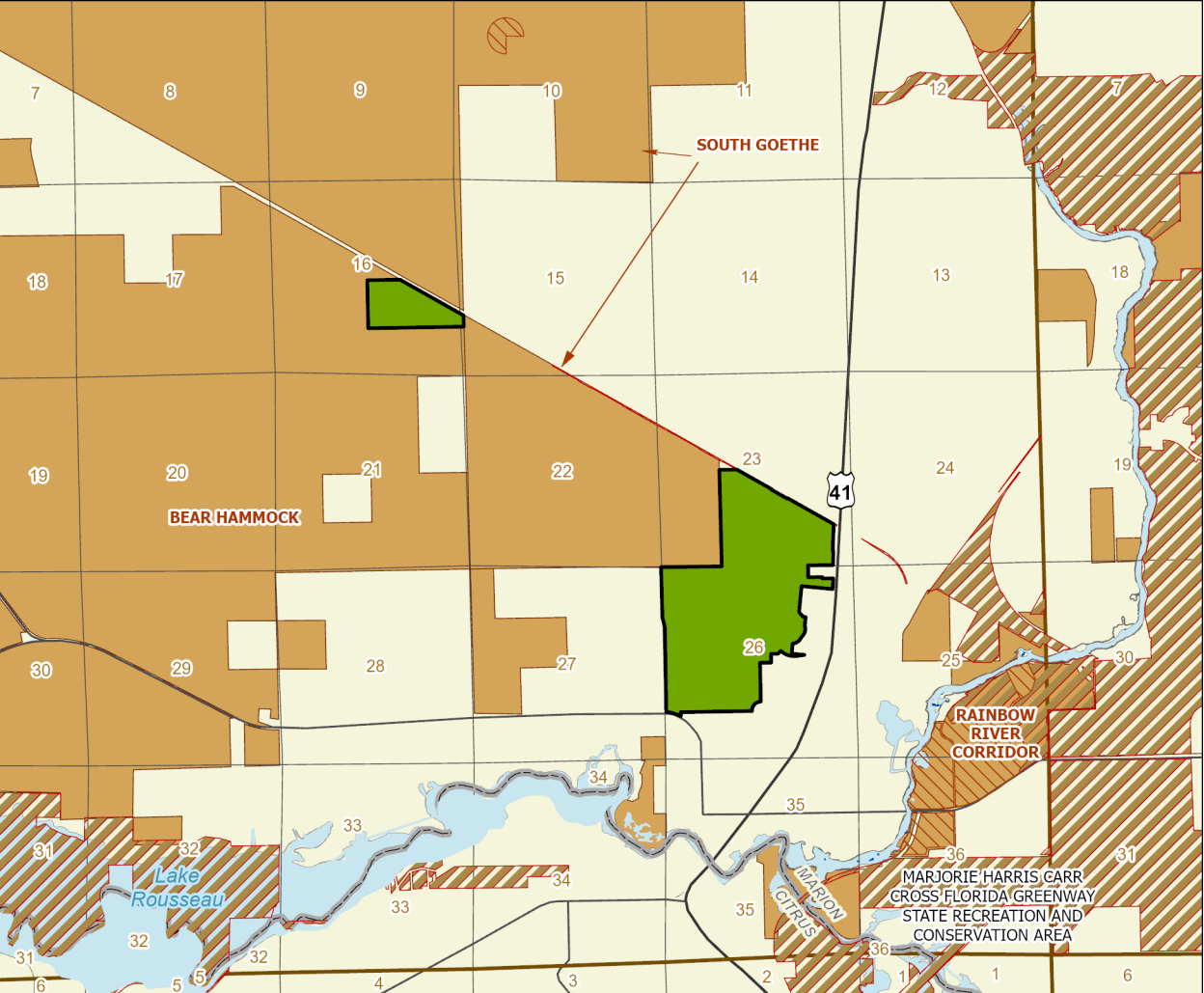
According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), all or most of the proposal contributes to Aquifer Recharge, Surface Water Protection, and FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities. Lesser but nonetheless substantial contributions are made to Ecological Greenways and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

	DHR	FFS	Griner	DEP	FWC	Palmer	Peppers	Watts	Gamblin	Select
Project										



SOUTH GOETHE FLORIDA FOREVER PROJECT WARM SPRINGS RANCH BOUNDARY AMENDMENT

MARION COUNTY

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



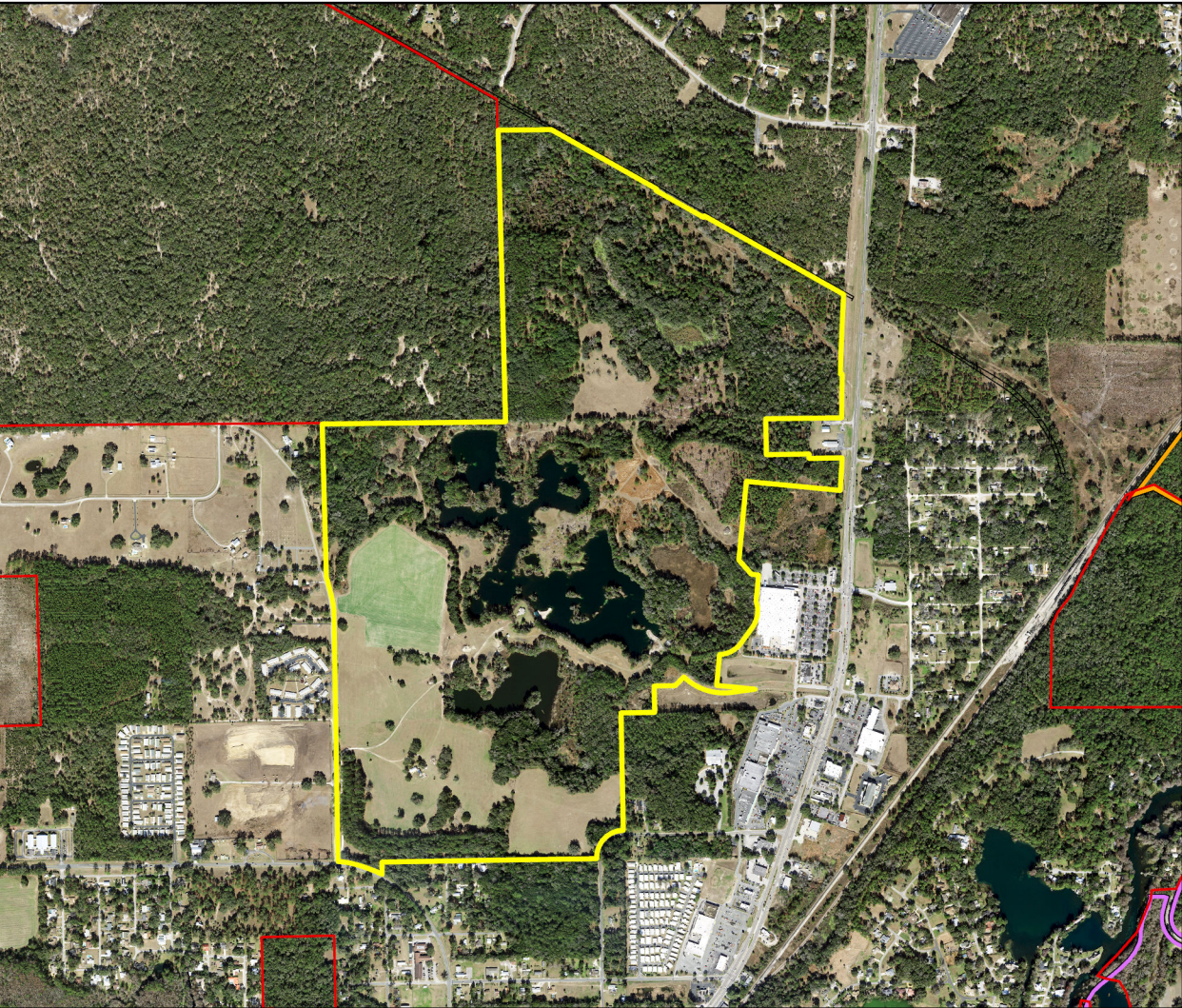
0 1 2
Miles



MAP BY FL NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY MAY 2025

SOUTH GOETHE FLORIDA FOREVER PROJECT WARM SPRINGS RANCH BOUNDARY AMENDMENT: MAP 1

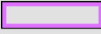
FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED ADDITION AS OF APRIL 2025

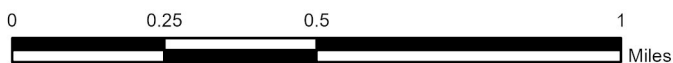


Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, April 2025

Background: FDOT 2023 Aerial Imagery Resolution = 0.2 meter

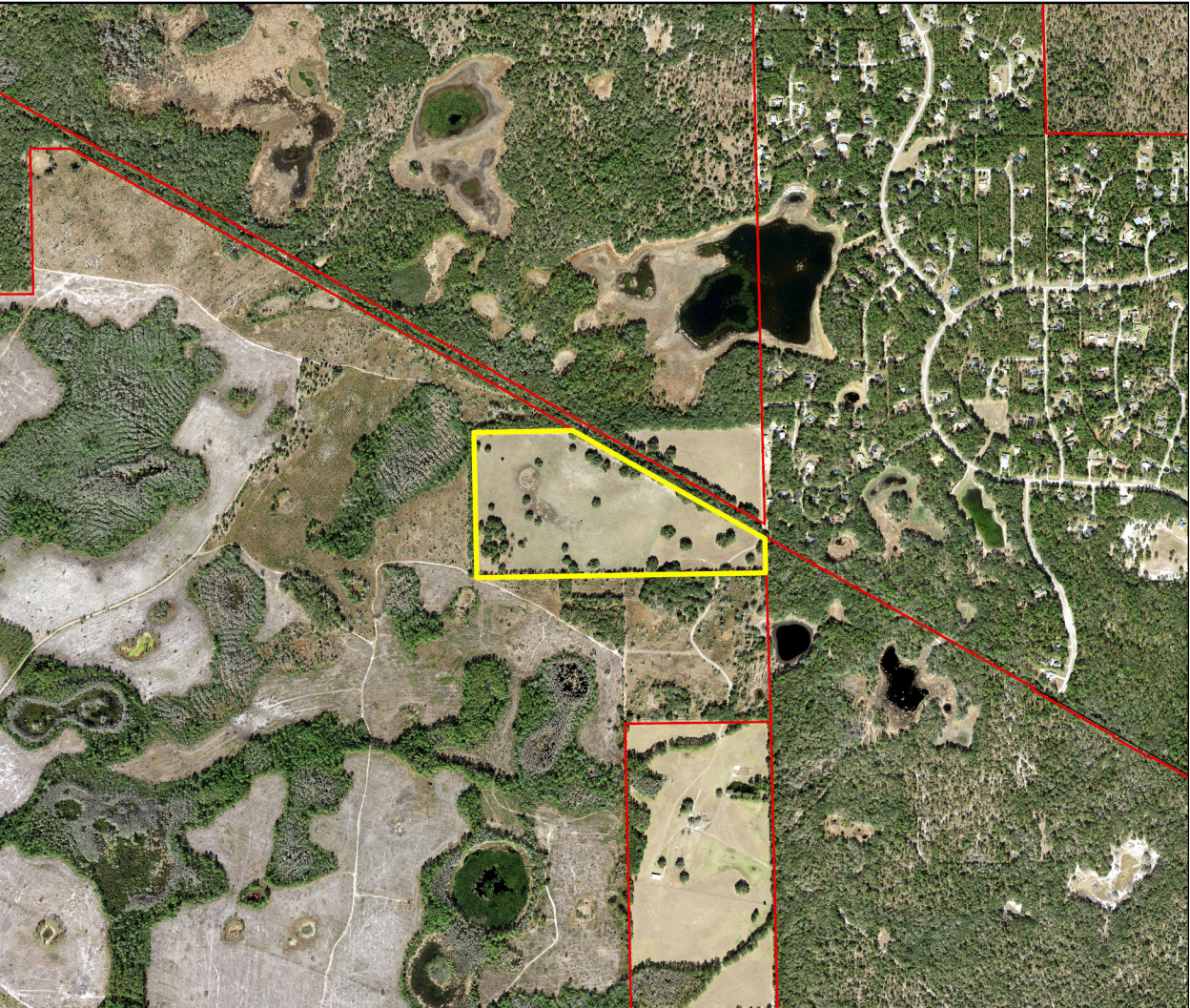


-  Florida Forever Proposed Addition
-  Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  Existing State Conservation Lands
-  Existing Private Conservation Lands



SOUTH GOETHE FLORIDA FOREVER PROJECT WARM SPRINGS RANCH BOUNDARY AMENDMENT: MAP 2

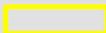
FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED ADDITION AS OF APRIL 2025

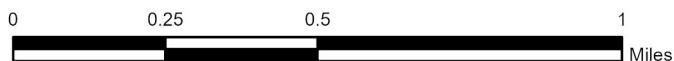


Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, April 2025

Background: FDOT 2023 Aerial Imagery Resolution = 0.2 meter



-  Florida Forever Proposed Addition
-  Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  Existing State Conservation Lands



South Goethe Addition (Warm Springs Ranch): Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20250422

GIS ACRES = 515

MEASURES	Resource Acres ^a	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	3	< 1%
Priority 3	150	29%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	26	5%
Total Acres	179	35%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	28	5%
Priority 5	212	41%
Priority 6	210	41%
Total Acres	451	88%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	226	44%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Total Acres	226	44%
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)	28	6%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	0	0%
Total Acres	28	6%
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	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	18	3%
Priority 6	2	< 1%
Total Acres	20	4%

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	304	59%
Priority 5	2	< 1%
Priority 6	170	33%
Priority 7	0	0%
Total Acres	475	92%
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	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	13	2%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	13	2%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	213	41%
Priority 2	138	27%
Priority 3	164	32%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	515	100%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles)		
(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)		
Land Trail Priorities	3.4	
Land Trail Opportunities	0.0	
Total Miles	3.4	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)		0 sites
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	6	1%
Priority 3	3	< 1%
Priority 4	20	4%
Priority 5	10	2%
Total Acres	39	8%
G3: Forestland for Recharge		41 8%

^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 2, 2025
Subject: Proposed Boundary Modification to Florida Forever BOT Project: South Goethe – Warm Springs Ranch (Marion County)

The major goal of the South Goethe Florida Forever BOT Project is to provide a landscape corridor from the Goethe State Forest to the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area along the Withlacoochee River. The project will provide a significant buffer along the southern boundary of the state forest while enhancing the forest and its associated habitat through restoration. The ca. 516.9-acre Warm Springs Ranch property is proposed as an addition to the project. The property is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition.

The proposed addition consists of two disjunct tracts, a smaller northwestern one and a larger southeastern one, 1.5 miles apart in extreme southwestern Marion County. The latter is immediately adjacent to the northern edge of the city of Dunnellon. The northeastern boundaries of both tracts are an old railroad grade indicated on the USGS 7.5' topographic map. The portion of the grade along the southeastern tract is included within the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area. Most of the land across this grade is in residential development. The swath of land between the two tracts of the proposal is within the South Goethe FFBOT project; this project is contiguous on the west with Bear Hammock Florida Forever BOT Project, which surrounds most of the northwestern tract. Thus, the two tracts of the proposal provide an opportunity to consolidate and extend existing Florida Forever projects.

Proposed lands are uplands situated just north of the confluence of the Rainbow River (Blue Run) with the Withlacoochee River, which is impounded as Lake Rousseau to the west of Dunnellon. The northwestern tract was cleared decades ago and is in improved pasture with scattered live oaks. A small depression marsh remains in the western half but is likely disturbed given that the site supports cattle grazing. The site probably once supported mesic flatwoods or sandhill. The southeastern tract, though also disturbed, appears to retain a more diverse landcover. The south-central portion supports an anastomosing, tree-bordered lake system with at least one house, boathouse, and possibly a barn. As noted in the application, the lake was formed from phosphate mining in the late 19th century and now remains filled by groundwater. Most of the land to the south has been cleared (now improved pasture and an agricultural field), although some forest remains. North of the lake, the landscape is a mosaic of forest and cleared land. Forests on site probably are a mix of hardwoods and pines, possibly once representing mesic flatwoods and possibly sandhill, with one narrow strand of dome swamp in the north.

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 records of rare/listed species on site, although absence of other records may reflect lack of on-site field surveys, as a variety of rare species is known from the general area.

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 of the proposal contributes to Aquifer Recharge (100%, priorities 1, 2, and 3), Surface Water Protection (92%, priorities 4 and 6), and FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (88%, mostly priorities 5 and 6). Lesser but nonetheless substantial contributions are made to Ecological Greenways (44%, priority 2) and Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (35%, chiefly priorities 3 and 5). No other category contributions exceed 10%. Six percent of the site is remotely identified as mesic-wet flatwoods, an Under-represented Natural Community.