ITEM 21:

Vote on whether to amend the Devil's Garden Florida Forever Project Boundary to add one parcel totaling approximately 41.73 GIS acres in Hendry County with a tax assessed market value of $854,240.

LOCATION:

Hendry County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Keri Work Center Property amendment proposed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission adds one parcel in Hendry County totaling approximately 41.73 GIS acres to the Devil's Garden Florida Forever project. The property consists of one parcel owned by Alico Inc. The parcel has a tax assessed value of $845,240.

The proposal shares both its eastern and southern boundary with the Devil's Garden project. Moreover, the proposal abuts the Okaloacoochee Slough Wildlife Management Area (OSWMA) to the south, expanding on an existing corridor of conservation lands extending from Dinner Island Ranch WMA northward to Fisheating Creek. The property is proposed for fee simple acquisition. All landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. The property is located Priority 1 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has confirmed the parcel would be managed as part of the OSWMA. The property contains four residences and an office building that would provide essential housing to recruit and retain FWC staff responsible for managing multiple WMAs in the area.

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

Project History:

The Devil's Garden project in Collier and Hendry Counties was approved by ARC in 2002. The Devil's Garden project will help to protect Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community and landscape levels and fill a gap in a critical landscape corridor for the federally endangered Florida panther.

The Devil's Garden project includes over 82,995 acres with 28,566 acres remaining and is ranked number 20 in the Critical Natural Lands category on the 2024 Florida Forever Priority List. The tax assessed value for the remaining acres to be acquired in this project per property appraiser information (2023) is $126,410,842.

FNAI Review:

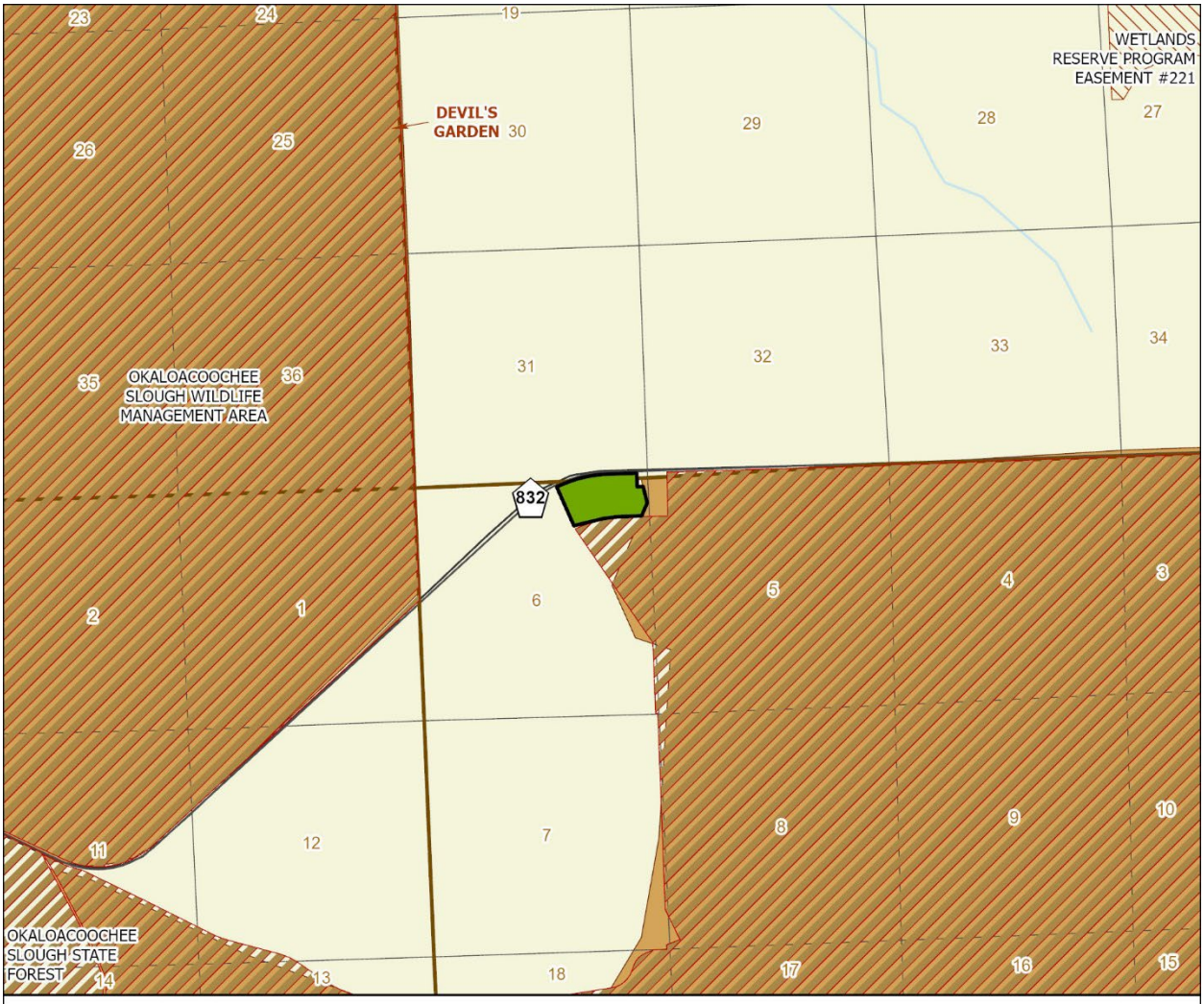
According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 100% of the site contributes to Ecological Greenways, Surface Water Protection and Aquifer Recharge. 99% of the site contributes to Natural Floodplain Function, 97% to Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas, and 95% to FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities and Functional Wetlands. The site lies within the Primary Habitat Zone of the Florida panther.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

Project	DHR	FFS	Lynetta Griner	DEP	FWC	Bill Palmer	Elva Peppers	Selected
Devil's Garden: Keri Work Center Property	Y							



DEVIL'S GARDEN PROPOSED ADDITION (KERI WORK CENTER PROPERTY)

HENDRY COUNTY

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

N

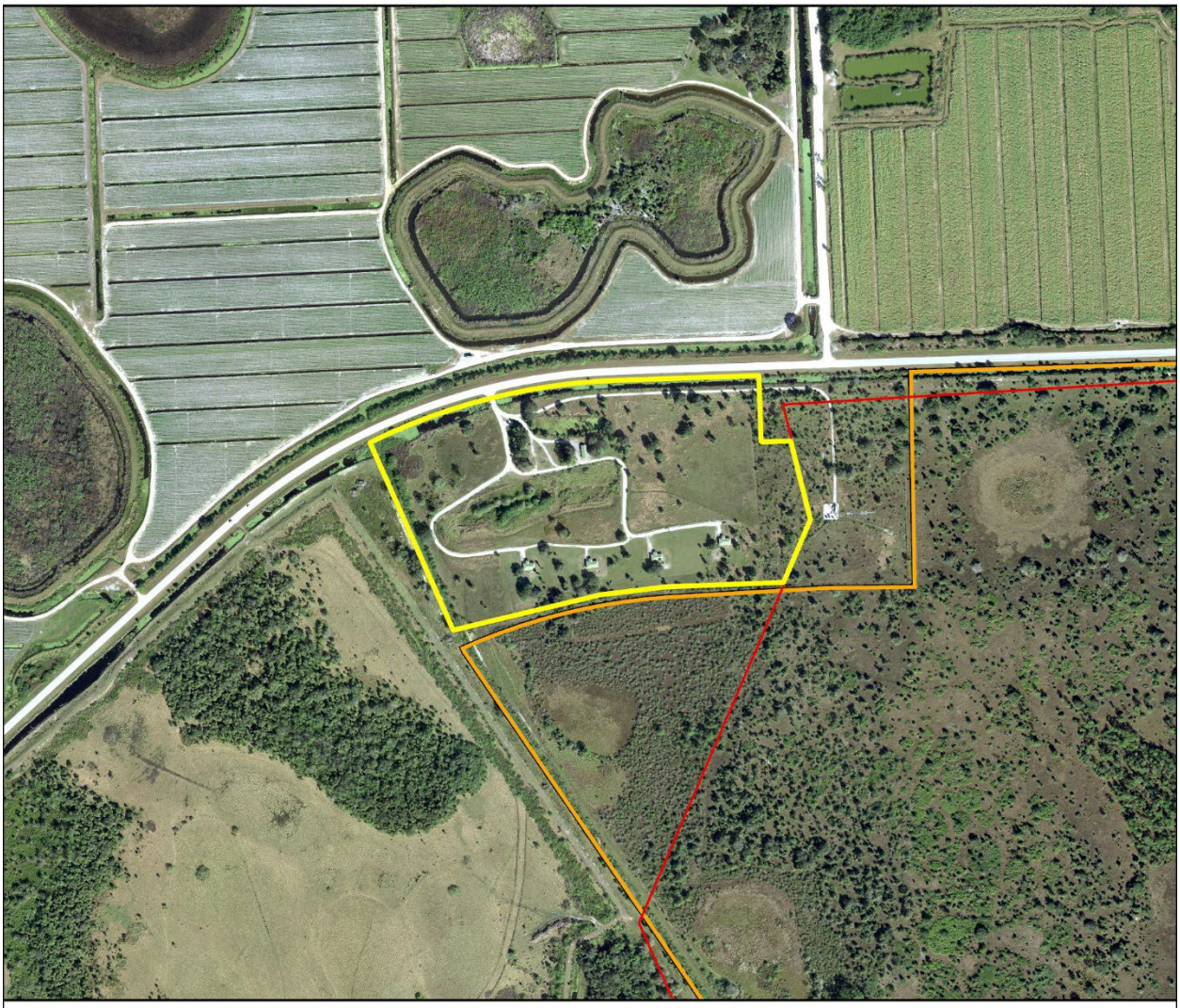
0 1 2 Miles



MAP BY FL NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY AUGUST 2024

Devil's Garden Proposed Addition
(Keri Work Center Property)

FLORIDA FOREVER BOARD OF TRUSTEES PROJECT PROPOSED ADDITION AS OF AUGUST 2024



Map Produced by: FL Natural Areas Inventory, N. Pasco, August 2024 Background: County Ortho Imagery 2023 Resolution = 0.15 meter

FNAI

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

N

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

Devil's Garden Addition (Keri Work Center): Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20240821

GIS ACRES = 40.1

MEASURES	Resource Acres[a]	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	3.9	10%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	33.9	85%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	1.1	3%
Total Acres	38.9	97%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	37.8	95%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	37.8	95%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	39.6	99%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	0.3	< 1%
Total Acres	39.9	100%
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)	0	0%
Upland Hardwood Forest (G5)	0	0%
Total Acres	0	0%
B6: Occurrences of FNAI Tracked Species		
G1	1	
G2	0	
G3	0	
G4	1	
G5	0	
Total	2	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	39.4	99%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	39.4	99%

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	39.9	100%
Priority 6	0	0%
Priority 7	0	0%
Total Acres	39.9	100%
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	37.8	95%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	37.8	95%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	2.9	7%
Priority 6	37.0	93%
Total Acres	39.9	100%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles)		
(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)		
Land Trail Priorities	0.0	
Land Trail Opportunities	0.9	
Total Miles	0.9	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)	0 sites	
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands	37.4	94%
Total Acres	37.4	94%
G3: Forestland for Recharge	0	0%

[a]Acres 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.

Florida
Natural Areas
Inventory

To:	Meghan Lauer, DEP/OES
From:	Geoffrey Parks, FNAI
Date:	8/30/2024
Subject:	Proposed Boundary Modification to Florida Forever BOT Project: Devil's Garden – Keri Work Center (Hendry County)

The major goals of the Devil's Garden Florida Forever Project are to protect Florida's biodiversity at the species, natural community, and landscape levels and fill a gap in a critical landscape corridor for the federally endangered Florida panther. The ca. 40.1-acre Keri Work Center property is proposed as an addition to the project. The property is proposed for fee-simple acquisition, to be managed as part of Okaloacoochee Slough Wildlife Management Area (OSWMA).

The property is in central Hendry County, approximately 15 miles northeast of Immokalee and 15 miles southeast of LaBelle. The northern edge of the proposed addition fronts County Road 832 for about 0.35 miles. The tract lies on the edge of a nearly contiguous corridor of protected lands extending from Dinner Island Ranch WMA northward to Fisheating Creek. The entire southern boundary of the tract borders OSWMA, and Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest lies only 0.6 miles to the west. Other conservation connected conservation lands within 5 miles include Wetlands Reserve Easement #193 and Spirit of the Wild WMA; Wetlands Preserve Easement #221, though isolated from other protected land, lies 2.5 miles to the northeast. A small unacquired portion of the Devil's Garden FFBOT separates the tract's eastern boundary from OSWMA by only 0.1 mile.

The property is mostly cleared, consisting mainly of pasture-like open areas. An office building and 4 single-family residences occupy about 7 acres of the site, and a network of interior roads provides access to these from CR 832. An elongate artificial pond or borrow area occupies about 1 acre south of the larger building, and a smaller pond (about 0.7 acres) lies to the building's north. The larger pond has been colonized by shrubby growth and appears to be undergoing succession to swamp.

The site lies in the Primary Habitat Zone of the Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*; G5T1, S1, E, FE), as well as in a region where Florida black bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*; G5T4, S4, N, N) is classifield as Common by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Otherwise, the FNAI Florida Natural Heritage Database contains no documentation of rare or imperiled species on the site. However, the adjacent WMA is home to a variety of imperiled plants and animals; species such as Florida sandhill crane and crested caracara commonly use open pasture-like habitats like those found on the site, and may occur at least occasionally, but biological surveys have not been conducted.

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. According to the FFME, most of the property (95% or more) contributes to Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (mostly priority 3, with some priorities 1 and 5), FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (priority 3), Ecological Greenways (priority 1), Natural Floodplain Function (priority 4), Surface Water Protection (priority 5), Functional Wetlands (priority 4), Aquifer Recharge (mainly priority 6), and Sustainable Forestry (priority 5).

Florida Natural Areas Inventory – 1018 Thomasville Road Suite 200-C – Tallahassee, FL 32303 – 850-224-8207 – www.fnai.org
Florida Resources and Environmental Analysis Center – Institute of Science and Public Affairs
The Florida State University
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