ITEM 28:

Vote on whether to amend the Waccasassa Watershed Florida Forever project boundary to add sixteen parcels totaling approximately 948.60 GIS acres in Levy County with a tax assessed market value of $2,905,824.

LOCATION:

Levy County

DSL STAFF REMARKS:

The Long Pond amendment proposed by the Florida Conservation Group adds sixteen parcels in Levy County totaling approximately 948.6 GIS acres to the Waccasassa Watershed Florida Forever project. The property consists of sixteen parcels owned by the Williams Family Investments LLC. The sixteen parcels have a combined tax assessed value of $2,905,824.

The property lies approximately 5.5 miles west of the Waccasassa Watershed project and 6-8 miles from existing conservation lands including Devil's Hammock (Levy County), Upper Waccasassa Conservation Area (SRWMD), among others. The property is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition. All landowners have been contacted and are willing sellers. The proposal's namesake is a natural lake extending approximately 3 miles north to south that contains a mixture of marsh and/or floating aquatic vegetation as well as forested and cleared lands. The proposal lies within the boundary of the Suwannee - Gulf of Mexico watershed and contributes to the overall water quality and quantity of the Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve and Waccasassa Bay Preserve State Park. Acquisition of a conservation easement would enhance protection of water resources within the watershed and expand ecological connections in the region.

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 Waccasassa Watershed in Levy County was approved by ARC in 2023. The Waccasassa Watershed project will help ensure the water quality and quantity of the Waccasassa watershed. The project will also help to increase connectivity amongst conservation lands, including two Outstanding Florida Waterways: Waccasassa Bay State Preserve and Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve.

The Waccasassa Watershed project includes over 20,455 acres with 20,422 acres remaining and is ranked number 23 in the Partnerships and Regional Incentives 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 $87,784,372.

FNAI Review:

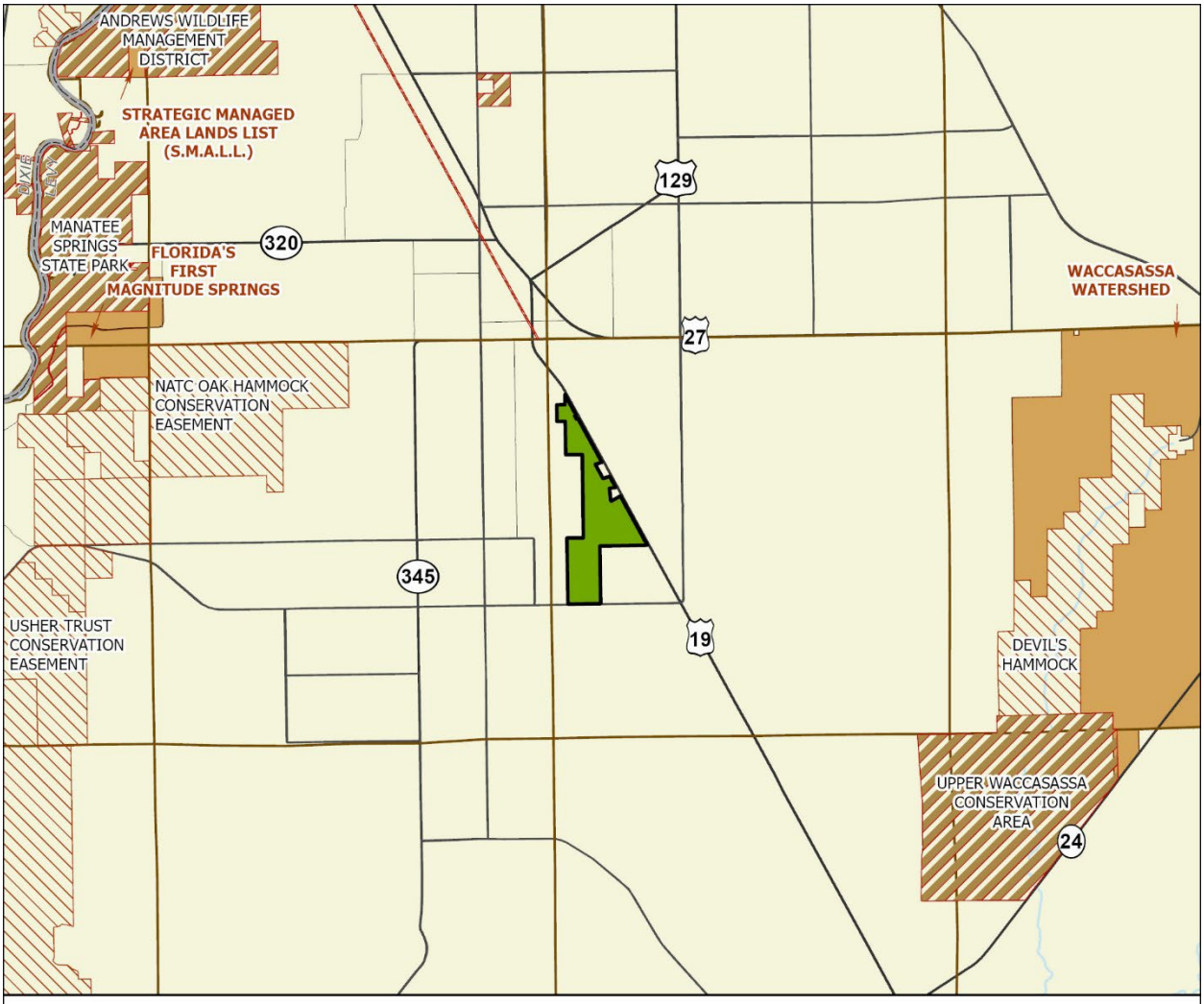
According to the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 97% of the site contributes to Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. 95% of the site contributes to Surface Water Protection and 94% to Aquifer Recharge. The proposal contains one documented archeological & historical site

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Vote on the proposed boundary amendment.

ARC RECOMMENDATION:

Project	DHR	FFS	Lynetta Griner	DEP	FWC	Bill Palmer	Elva Peppers	Selected
Waccasassa Watershed: Long Pond	Y							



WACCASASSA WATERSHED
PROPOSED ADDITION (LONG POND)

LEVY COUNTY

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

N

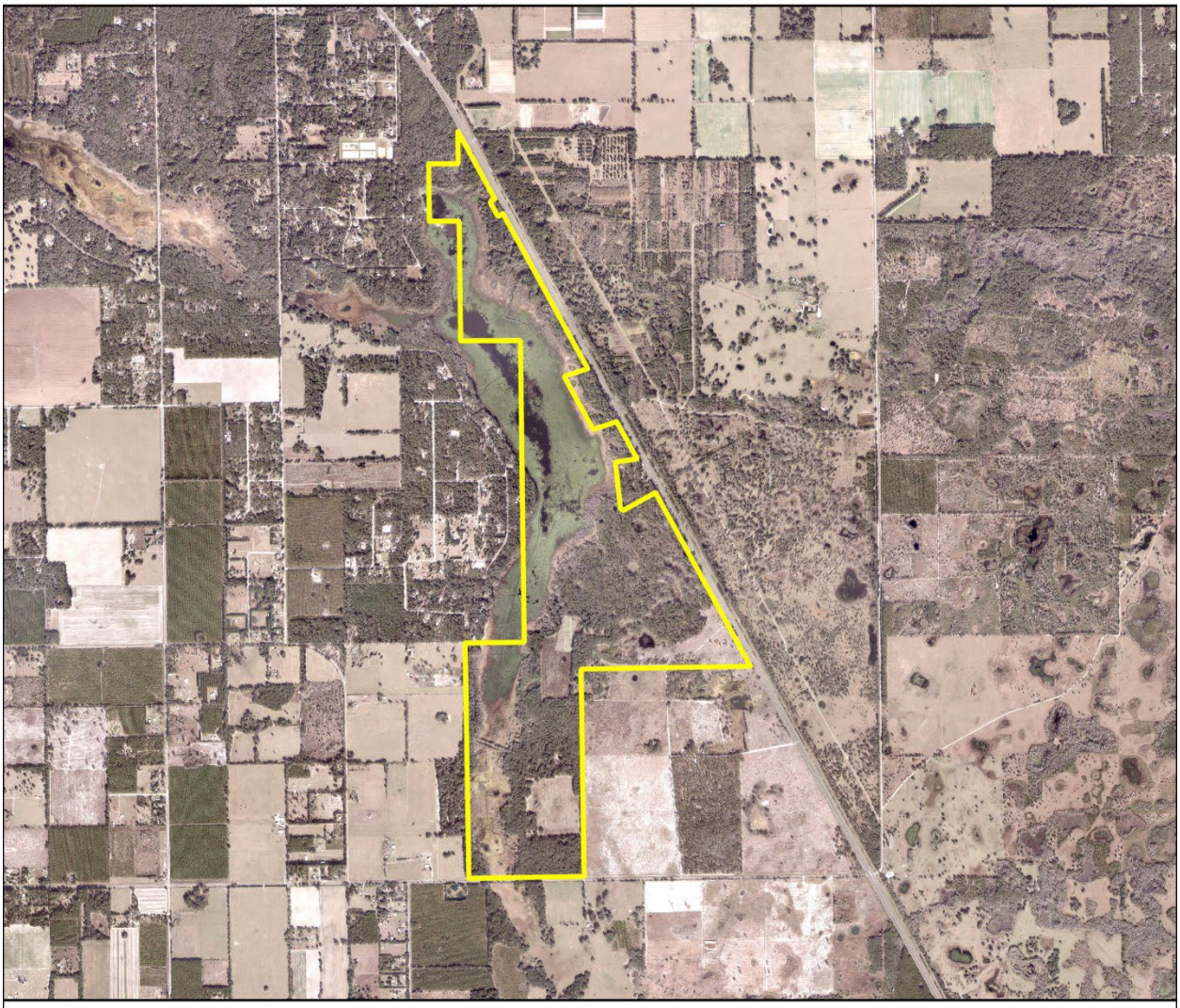
0 3.5 7 Miles



MAP BY FL NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY AUGUST 2024

Waccasassa Watershed Proposed Addition (Long Pond)

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 2022 Resolution = 0.15 meter

FNAI

Florida Forever Proposed Addition

N

0 0.5 1 2

Miles

Waccasassa Watershed Addition (Long Pond): Florida Forever Measures Evaluation 20240821

GIS ACRES = 949

MEASURES	Resource Acres[a]	% of project
B1: Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	452	48%
Priority 3	453	48%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	18	2%
Total Acres	923	97%
B2: FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	10	1%
Priority 5	416	44%
Priority 6	135	14%
Total Acres	561	59%
B3: Ecological Greenways		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	0	0%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5	445	47%
Total Acres	445	47%
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	0	
G2	0	
G3	0	
G4	0	
G5	1	
Total	1	
C4: Natural Floodplain Function		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	61	6%
Priority 3	300	32%
Priority 4	320	34%
Priority 5	44	5%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	725	76%

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	889	94%
Priority 7	9	< 1%
Total Acres	898	95%
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	6	< 1%
Priority 3	4	< 1%
Priority 4	16	2%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	26	3%
D3: Aquifer Recharge		
Priority 1	34	4%
Priority 2	109	11%
Priority 3	509	54%
Priority 4	236	25%
Priority 5	0	0%
Priority 6	0	0%
Total Acres	887	94%
E2: Recreational Trails (miles)		
(prioritized trail opportunities from Office of Greenways and Trails & Univ. Florida)		
Land Trail Priorities	3.1	
Land Trail Opportunities	0.0	
Total Miles	3.1	
F2: Arch. & Historical Sites (number)	1 site	
G1: Sustainable Forestry		
Priority 1	0	0%
Priority 2	0	0%
Priority 3	54	6%
Priority 4	0	0%
Priority 5 - Potential Pinelands	0	0%
Total Acres	54	6%
G3: Forestland for Recharge	46	5%

[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: Dale R. Jackson, Ph.D., FNAI
Date: August 30, 2024
Subject: Proposed Boundary Modification to Florida Forever BOT Project: Waccasassa Watershed – Long Pond (Levy County)

The major goals of the Waccasassa Watershed Florida Forever Board of Trustees ((FFBOT) project are to ensure the water quality and quantity of the Waccasassa River watershed as well as to increase connectivity among conservation lands, including two Outstanding Florida Waterways: Waccasassa Bay State Preserve and Big Bend Seagrasses Aquatic Preserve. The 949.0-acre Long Pond property is proposed as an addition to the project. The property is proposed for less-than-fee acquisition.

The Long Pond proposal borders the western edge of US-19/98 just south of Chiefland in northwestern Levy County. The site lies ca. 5.5 miles west of the nearest tract of the existing Waccasassa Watershed Florida Forever Project, as well as 6–8 miles southeast of tracts in the Florida's First Magnitude Springs and SMALL FFBOT projects. Conservation lands within ca. 6–8 miles include Devils Hammock to the east, Upper Waccasassa Conservation Area to the southeast, and several units generally to the west (NATC Oak Hammock Conservation Easement, Manatee Springs State Park, Andrews Wildlife Management District, and several other conservation easements). The proposal lies ca. 5.5 miles north of two other proposals (M3BLT LLC and Rocky Hammock Timber) also being considered in this cycle for addition to the Waccasassa Watershed FFBOTproject.

The proposal extends ca. 3 miles from north to south to encompass much of the main body of Long Pond (but excluding some portions, including the entire northwestern arm and parts of the western and southern shores). The lake is characterized as a natural lake occupying an abandoned stream valley. Much of the lake is vegetated with marsh and/or floating aquatic vegetation, although open water occupies some of the northern half. What appears in aerial photography to be a boat ramp and canal (outside the proposal to the west) may provide boating access to the open water. The southern portion of the site (as well as extreme north and parts adjacent to the highway) includes both forested and cleared lands, likely pasture, agriculture, or very young pine plantation. Forest appears to consist of second-growth mixed hardwoods, possibly with an admixture of pines. At least a half dozen wetlands resembling sinkhole ponds are visible.

The only rare species recorded in the database of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory is bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*; G5/S3, N, N), which at least formerly nested near the northern end of the pond near the highway. Other rare species are possible, particularly wetland birds, but determining their presence would require biological surveys.

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. More than 90% of the site contributes to Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas (97%, chiefly priorities 2 and 3), Surface Water Protection (95%, priority 6), and Aquifer Recharge (94%, priorities 1-4). Substantial portions also contribute to FNAI Habitat Conservation Priorities (59%, priorities 5 and 6), Ecological Greenways (47%, priority 5), and Natural Floodplain Function (76%, priorities 2-5). No other measure accounts for more than 6% of the site.