

Adams Ranch

Osceola County

Less-Than-Fee

Purpose for State Acquisition

The goal of the Adams Ranch Florida Forever project is to protect open rangeland and native prairie that support many rare species with large habitat requirements. It was originally part of a larger proposal (55,000 acres) submitted to the Conservation and Recreation Lands program in 1986-87 by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory. A portion of the 1986-1987 proposal is now part of Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area, but the majority remains in private ownership. The intervening 20 years has not diminished the significance of this area to the many species and natural communities of concern.

One of the primary concepts of this project is the protection of the way of life for the ranch, which is managed in a way that has historically allowed for the continued protection of an important and biodiverse assemblage of imperiled vertebrate wildlife. Another goal of the project is to provide continued buffering of the Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area from development, avoiding fragmentation of the landscape and allowing continued proper management on a landscape scale through prescribed fire, maintenance of hydrological regimes, and other appropriate strategies.

This project meets the Florida Forever goals of increasing protection of biodiversity by acquiring 81 acres of Priority 1 habitat and 6,140 acres of Priority 2 habitat, and preserving 10,618 acres of habitat for such rare species as the eastern indigo snake and the bald eagle. Another Florida Forever goal is to increase the acreage of landscape linkages and conservation

corridors, by contributing to a 200,000-acre mosaic of protection areas that includes the adjoining Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. Other Florida Forever goals are to protect waters and wetlands of the state, and the Adams Ranch will preserve 762 acres of floodplain, 5,811 acres that would help protect surface waters, and 2,598 acres of functioning wetlands. Some 10,979 acres of the proposal help recharge the aquifer.

Manager

The Office of Environmental Services, or its successor, would serve as the conservation-easement (CE) monitor unless otherwise noted. Adams Ranch CE will be monitored by the Florida Forest Service-FFS.

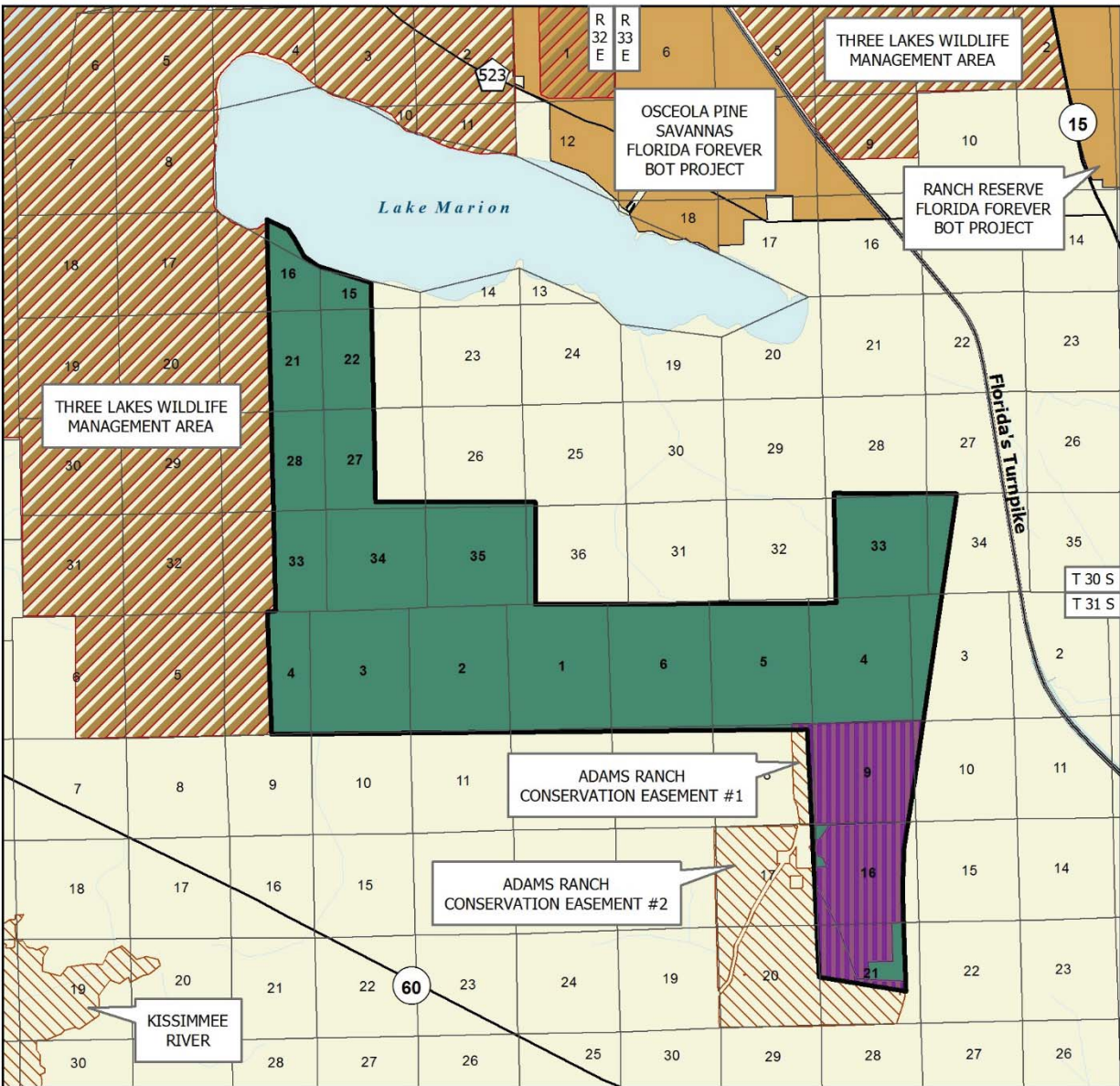
General Description

The Adams Ranch Florida Forever project includes a portion of one ownership to be considered for less-than-fee-simple acquisition totaling 11,038 (GIS) acres in southern Osceola County. About 5.2 miles of the western boundary of the project abuts the southeastern boundary of Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. The northwestern boundary fronts Lake Marian for 1.3 miles. The project stretches east through the center of the entire Adams Ranch holding, which is bracketed to the north and south with Adams Ranch, Inc. property and bounded on the east by Peavine Road. Avon Park Air Force Range and Bombing Range Ridge Florida Forever project are no more than 10 miles to the west of the project. The Mills Ranch and Escape Ranch Conservation Easements lie approximately 3.5 miles

Adams Ranch FNAI Elements	
Eastern Indigo Snake	G3/S3
Gopher Tortoise	G3/S3
Bald Eagle	G5/S3
Crested Caracara	G5/S2
4 rare species are associated with the project	

Placed on List	2007
Project Area (GIS Acres)	11,023
Acres Acquired (GIS)	702*
at a Cost of	\$1,442,155
Acres Remaining (GIS)	10,320
Estimated (Tax Assessed) Value of	\$9,950,131

*795 acres purchased through R&FLP (DACS-FF funds); 698 acres within FF project boundary (\$2,017/acre).



ADAMS RANCH

OSCEOLA COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Acquired for Conservation (Less Than Fee)
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  State Owned Lands
-  Other Conservation Lands



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to the east. Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park is approximately 8.5 miles to the south.

Adams Ranch is a working ranch with large acreages of improved pasture for beef cattle and sod production. Improved pasture covers approximately 34 percent of the proposed area. The great majority has been planted with bahia grass.

The natural communities present within the matrix of agricultural land include basin marsh, depression marsh, dome swamp, dry prairie, mesic flatwoods, prairie hammock, and scrubby flatwoods. Many of these are in good condition even though they are impacted by cattle and a network of roads and drainage ditches that have altered hydrology.

Nearly 60 percent of the area is designated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as a Strategic Habitat Conservation Area for a variety of rare and imperiled species. This project seeks to conserve a mosaic of remaining and increasingly rare natural communities on the site that provide important habitat for an abundance of listed species occurring there as well as providing aquifer recharge, watershed and wetlands protection.

Adams Ranch not only provides habitat for listed species, but also for many species of neotropical migrant birds passing through during the spring and fall. The habitat is also important for game species including white-tailed deer, wild turkey and northern bobwhite quail. These species depend on the dry and wet prairie, mesic and scrubby flatwoods, marshes and hammocks for cover, roost sites, nesting sites and forage.

Public Use

The project is a less-than-fee purchase without public access. Due to the lack of public access, there will not be any public resource-based outdoor recreation potential for the project.



Acquisition Planning

On June 15, 2007 the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added Adams Ranch to the A list of the Florida Forever Priority List. This less-than-fee project was sponsored by The Nature Conservancy in a proposal submitted on December 29, 2006. It has about 11,057 acres and an assessed taxable value of \$10,638,040.

In 2010, through the Rural & Family Lands Program (RFLP), Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services closed on 795 acres owned by the Adams family for \$1,603,510.

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project into the Florida Forever category of Less-than-Fee projects.

In 2015 they closed on an additional 1,536 acres. Some 698 acres of the 2010 CE purchase are within the Florida Forever project boundary and some 154 GIS-calculated acres of the 2015 purchase are within the project boundary.

Coordination

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Osceola County, and the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) are partners in this project.

Management Policy Statement

As a proposed conservation easement or other less-than-fee interest, the project will be managed by the private landowner with restrictions. The purchase of development rights, the prohibition of any further conversion of existing natural areas to agricultural uses, and limited public access to some sites will likely be the primary focus of the conservation easement.

Management Prospectus

The Office of Environmental Services, or its successor, is designated to ensure oversight of the conservation easement on this project.

Updated 2/18/2016