

Bear Hammock

Marion County

Critical Natural Lands

Purpose for State Acquisition

Acquiring the Bear Hammock project in southern Marion County would meet the state goals of enhanced coordination of land-acquisition efforts by making a conservation link that fills a gap among several other properties. One goal of state conservation is to preserve areas of at least 50,000 acres, and Bear Hammock provides a connector between Goethe State Forest and the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, creating a continuity of more than 200,000 acres. Bear Hammock meets state goals of preserving habitat areas, because the project has an estimated 4,232 acres of rare species habitat. About 24 percent of the area is considered Strategic Habitat Conservation Area. Bear Hammock is known to be habitat for such species as wood stork, bald eagle, diamondback rattlesnake, and gopher tortoise. Finally, the property has a high potential to fill the Florida Forever goals of providing recreation by trails, horseback riding, camping, picnicking, and water access.

Manager

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is recommended by staff as manager of the project, except for a separate piece that is an island in Lake Rousseau. That island would be managed as part of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, which is managed by the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT).

General Description

Bear Hammock is located in the valley of the Withlacoochee River, near Dunnellon and Brooksville. About two-thirds of this 4,685-acre site is covered by pine plantations that were historically a mix of pine flatwoods and sandhill, or scrub, terrain. While slash pines have been planted in most areas, there are also native shrubs that include saw palmetto, dwarf live oak,

shiny blueberry, gallberry and fetterbush. There are several natural lakes on the property, ranging from shallow ponds with abundant aquatic herbs to sandybottomed clear water lakes. At least one of these lakes is a sandhill upland lake with no associated swamp.

Public Use

Bear Hammock has potential for providing many resource-based recreation opportunities. It is located within a few miles of Dunnellon, with excellent paved highway access, and is adjacent to the Cross Florida Greenway, as well as being adjacent to the South Goethe Addition Florida Forever project and Goethe State Forest. This land contains seven lakes. Access to the lakes and rivers would provide canoeing, kayaking, sailing, fishing and possibly swimming. The highly scenic areas around the lakes could provide picnicking and wildlife viewing. The many roads within the property will provide off-road bicycling, hiking and horseback riding opportunities. The expansive trail system that can be supported by the property can also be connected with trails and recreational opportunities from other nearby public lands. The property has about 3½ miles of access from CR 40 and CR 363. This easy access could bolster the project as a full service recreation area by providing camping opportunities, picnicking, extensive trails, nature study, environmental education and water access. Depending on management emphasis, hunting can also be supported.

Bear Hammock FNAI Elements	
Florida Black Bear	G5T2/S2
Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake	G4/S3
2 rare species are associated with the project	

Placed on List	2008
Project Area (GIS Acres)	4,680
Acres Acquired (GIS)	0
at a Cost of	\$0
Acres Remaining (GIS)	4,680
with Estimated (Tax Assessed) Value of \$32,576,529	

Acquisition Planning

On December 12, 2008, the Acquisition and Restoration Council added the Bear Hammock project to the Florida Forever acquisition list as a fee-simple project.

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project into the Florida Forever category of Critical Natural Lands projects.

Coordination FWC is considered an acquisition partner for this project.

Management Policy Statement

The objectives of acquiring Bear Hammock are to conserve and protect the significant Strategic Habitat Conservation Area that makes up almost a quarter of the project area, helping preserve species that are documented on this site, including the wood stork, the bald eagle, the diamondback rattlesnake, and the gopher tortoise. Another major goal is to provide recreation for the public on trails, with horseback riding, with camping and picnicking, and by access to water. The FWC management prospectus also says that hunting is possible depending on management plans.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation Bear Hammock will increase the connectivity within the conservation landscape extending from north central peninsular Florida to the Gulf Coast, from the Ocala National Forest westward along the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area to Goethe State Forest, to the NATC Gulf Hammock Conservation Easement (Suwannee River Water Management District), the Cedar Key Scrub Preserve State Park, and to other conservation lands extending to Big Bend Wildlife Management Area. If acquired, Bear Hammock would provide considerable restoration and expansion of existing habitat for imperiled species and would advance the goals of species and habitat recovery plans.

Manager The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has been chosen as the manager for this project.

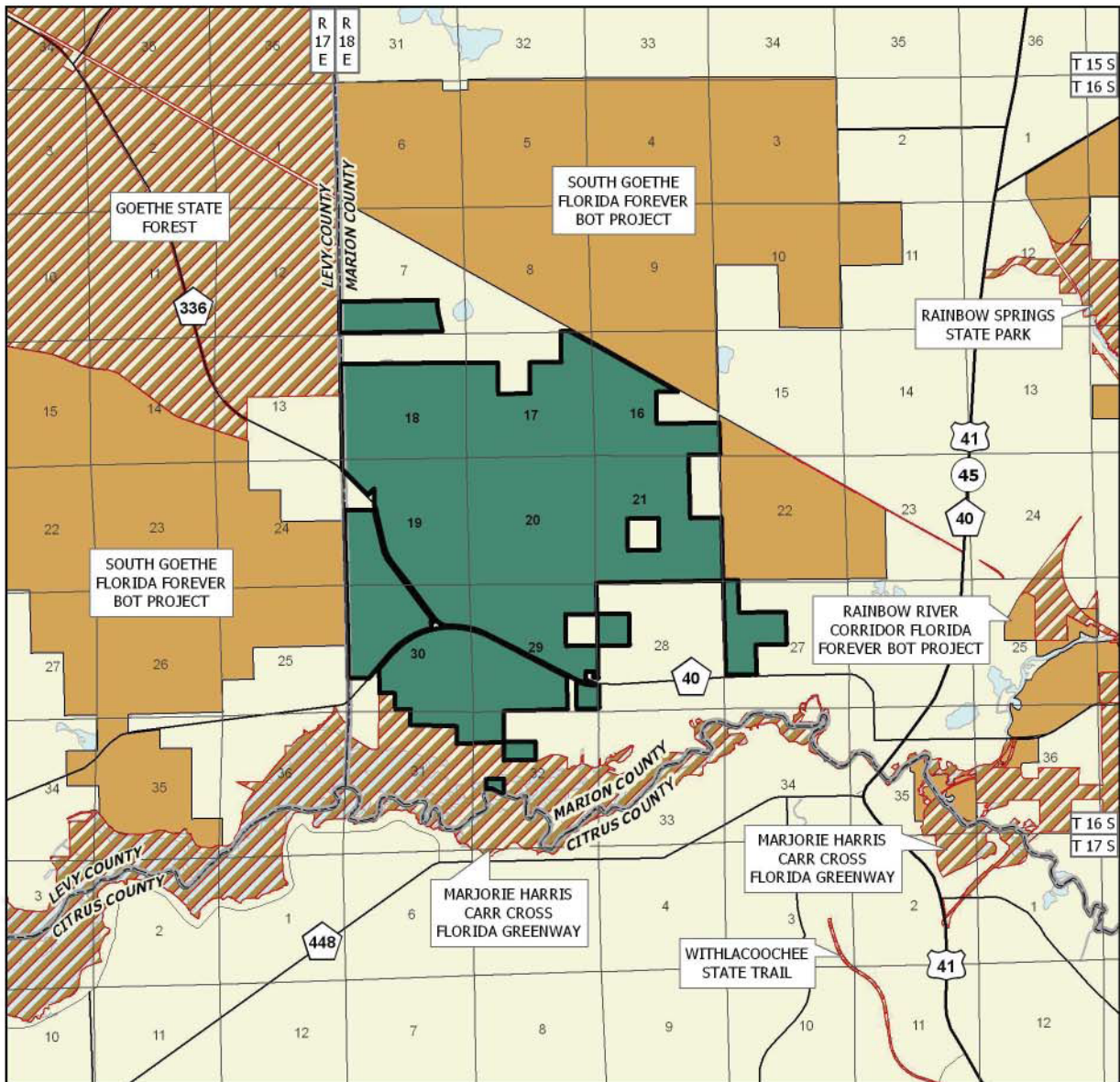
Conditions affecting intensity of management Major portions include lands that are natural areas, requiring resource management methods such as prescribed fire where appropriate. Additional methods may be necessary for some management units to restore a desired future condition. FWC would conduct historic vegetation analysis to determine appropriate desired future conditions, objectives, and restoration methods. This is especially important for conservation of habitats and populations of imperiled or rare species.

Among methods for perpetuation of less disturbed natural communities are those to control human uses, ecological restoration, exotic species removal, prescribed burning, and other important methods for management and protection of resources. Any suburban development around Bear Hammock could affect certain management actions and uses such as the ability to conduct prescribed burning.

Biotic surveys would be important to accomplish during the early part of plan development and implementation because imperiled or rare species are expected to occur on Bear Hammock. Developing facilities, as on all wildlife and environmental areas and wildlife management areas, would be kept to the minimum level necessary to assure protection of the resources and compatible recreational experiences. Any such development would be confined to areas of previous disturbance.

Timetable for implementing management, and provisions for security and protection of infrastructure During the first year after acquisition, emphasis would be placed on site security, posting boundaries, public access, fire management, resource inventory, and removal of refuse. A management plan would be developed by FWC stating management goals and objectives necessary to implement future resource management, taking into consideration existing conditions and approaches necessary to achieve desired future conditions. The management plan will also establish future roles of cooperating entities including governmental agencies and other stakeholders. Long-range goals would emphasize ecosystem management and the conservation of fish and wildlife.





BEAR HAMMOCK

MARION COUNTY

-  Florida Forever BOT Project Boundary
-  Essential Parcel(s) Remaining
-  Other Florida Forever BOT Projects
-  State Owned Lands



0 0.5 1 2
Miles



MARCH 2009

Revenue-generating potential The revenue generating potential of Bear Hammock is not known and will depend upon future uses to be approved in the management plan. However, revenue from such environmental lands might include forest products production, sales of hunting licenses, fishing licenses, wildlife management area permits, and other special hunting permits and user fees.

Cooperators in management activities FWC should cooperate with other state and local governmental agencies including the Florida Forest Service, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and the St. Johns River Water Management District in management of the property.

Management costs and sources of revenue The following has been submitted by FWC:

REVENUE SOURCES, MANAGEMENT COSTS AND EMPLOYEES NEEDED * (2008)

Category Source of Funds	Start-up CARL	Recurring CARL
Resource Management	\$ 102,745	\$ 88,629
Administration	\$ 82,345	\$ 33,072
Support	\$ 149,080	\$ 31,566
Capital Improvements	\$ 217,898	\$ 88,179
Visitor Services/Recreation	\$ 41,300	\$ 17,000
Law Enforcement	\$ 3,251	\$ 3,251
TOTAL	\$ 596,619	\$ 261,697

*Figures include salary for 1 FTE.

Updated February 4, 2016