

Clay Ranch

Putnam County

Less-Than-Fee

Purpose for State Acquisition

Acquiring a conservation easement over Clay Ranch would contribute to the goal of eventually attaining connections among the conservation lands in the region to create landscape-scale protection of the xeric uplands and associated wetlands characteristic of the Trail Ridge. It could also help to preserve and protect the healthy aquatic biota in lower reaches of Etoniah Creek. The tract has the characteristics needed to harbor imperiled species, and some imperiled species are documented to occur there. The sandhill upland lakes and marsh natural communities that occur on the tract are mostly intact and fulfilling their natural function. Although much of the uplands are in commercial uses including sod farming, cattle grazing, hay production and silviculture, the majority is in a semi-natural condition and has good potential, with the reintroduction of fire, for providing quality habitat for many imperiled species in the future.

Manager/Monitor

The property will continue to be managed by the landowner with restrictions imposed by a negotiated conservation easement. The Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Environmental Services (OES) will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the terms and conditions of the easement, unless otherwise noted.

General Description

Clay Ranch, approximately 2,380 acres in northwestern Putnam County, consists of a mix of forested uplands, scattered depression marshes and sandhill upland lakes

and areas - both uplands and wetlands – that have been converted to pasture and/or sod farm. Some remnant sandhill remains in the western half, although a large portion of the forested area has developed into xeric/mesic hammock. Clay Ranch is situated on the southeastern portion of Trail Ridge, a physiographic province dominated by rolling sandhills and dotted with sandhill upland lakes.

The proximity to other conservation lands in this region embellish the less-than-fee acquisition proposal. An added benefit is the potential to connect a corridor for the Florida black bear and provide a large tract of conservation land for watershed and wildlife protection. However, even with this acquisition, other tracts would need to be protected for the corridor to be complete. If a conservation easement were acquired on this site, perhaps other private landowners within the corridor would also consider their tracts for public acquisition.

Public Use

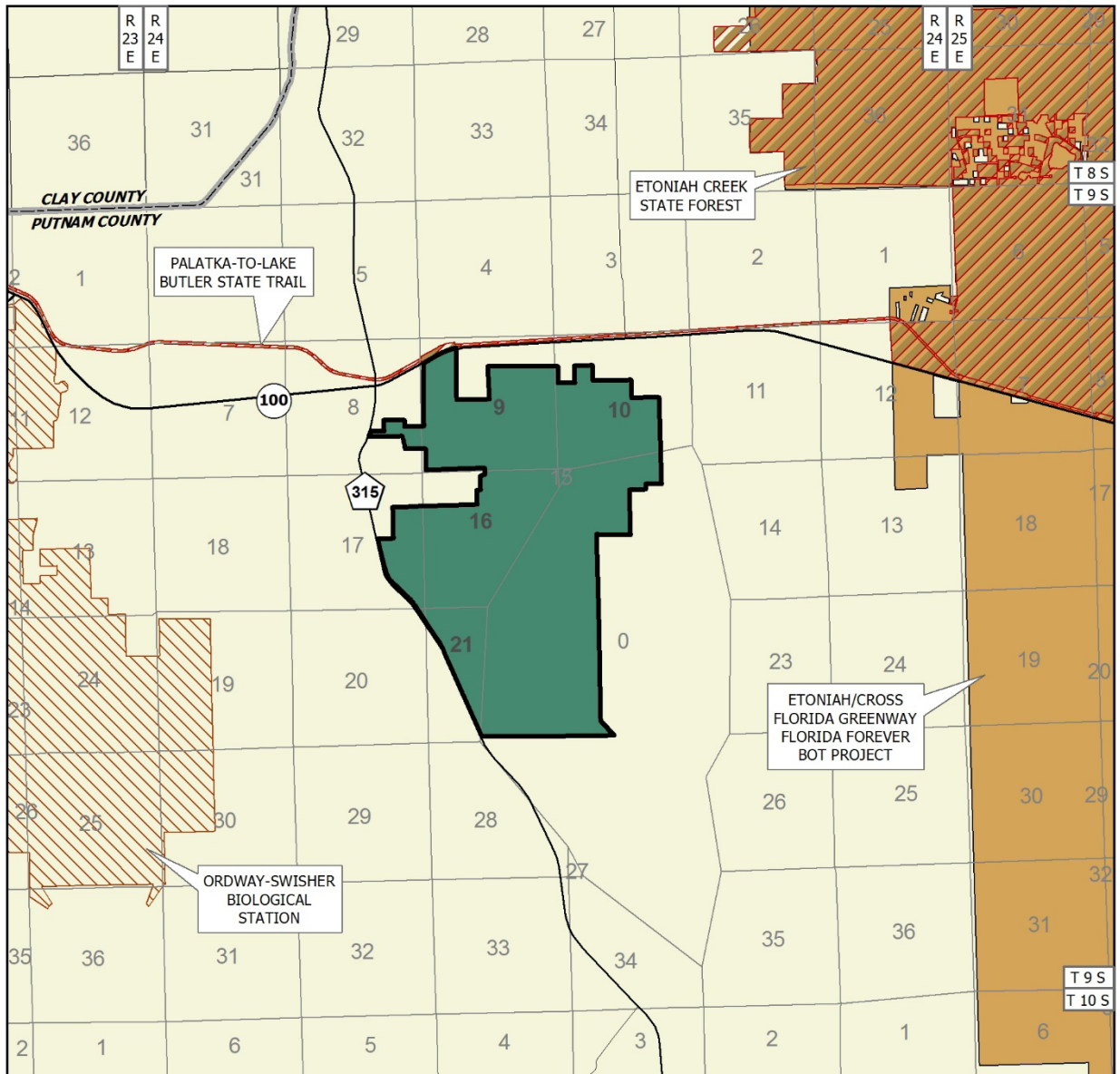
Since the Clay Ranch is being offered as a less-than-fee acquisition, public access is not being contemplated at this time. During the negotiations with the Clay family, some limited access for research or education may be possible to acquire.

Acquisition Planning

On June 9, 2006, the Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) added the Clay Ranch project to Group A of the August 2006 Florida Forever Priority list. This less-than-fee acquisition, sponsored by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Alachua Conservation

Clay Ranch FNAI Elements	
Florida Black Bear	G5T2/S2
Gopher Tortoise	G3/S3
Southeastern American Kestrel	G5T4/S3
3 rare species are associated with the project	

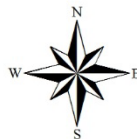
Placed on List	2006
Project Area (GIS acres)	2,460
Acres Acquired (GIS)	0
at a cost of	\$0
Acres Remaining (GIS)	2,460
with Estimated (Tax Assessed) Value of \$1,634,125	



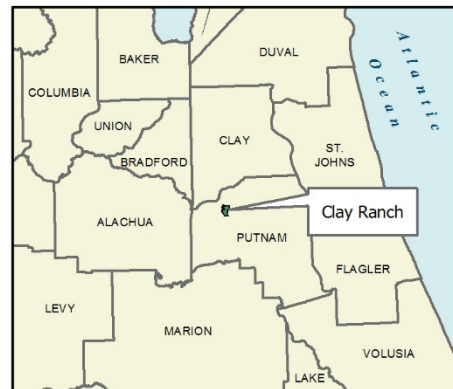
CLAY RANCH

PUTNAM COUNTY

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



0 0.5 1 2
Miles



JANUARY 2015

Trust, consists of one landowner, the Clay Family, ±2,380 acres and a 2005 taxable value of \$1,634,125.

On December 9, 2011, ARC placed this project in the Less-than-Fee category.

Coordination

No acquisition partnerships have been suggested at this time.

Management Policy Statement

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

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for state designation Protection of Clay Ranch would contribute to the goal of eventually connecting the conservation lands in the region to create landscape-scale protection of the xeric uplands and associated wetlands characteristic of the Trail Ridge, as well as agricultural open space. TNC indicates that efforts are being made to secure some of this area that could provide a direct connection between Clay Ranch and Ordway-Swisher Preserve. Katharine Ordway Preserve and Carl M. Swisher Memorial Nature Preserve (contiguous properties and both managed by the University of Florida) lay approximately 1.5 and 2.75 miles, respectively, west of the western boundary of Clay Ranch. The former Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) project, Putnam County Sandhills, abuts Ordway-Swisher Preserve on its eastern boundary and approaches to within approximately one mile of Clay Ranch. Etoniah Creek



State Forest is located 1.75 miles northeast of the site. Camp Blanding Military Reservation, Mike Roess Gold Head Branch State Park, and Belmore State Forest are within 6 to 10 miles to the north and northwest of Clay Ranch.

Manager/Monitor The property will continue to be managed by the landowner with restrictions imposed by a negotiated conservation easement. OES will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the terms and conditions of the easement, unless otherwise noted.

Conditions affecting intensity of management

Acquiring the Clay Ranch could help to preserve and protect the healthy aquatic biota in lower reaches of Etoniah Creek. While the natural communities on Clay Ranch need restoration, the site still exhibits a nice transition from higher xeric uplands in the west to more mesic conditions to the east.

Updated 3/24/2015